# Modern Foreign Language Learning: Exploring the Impact of Parental Orientations on Student Motivation

**Christopher Martin** BA(Hons) PGCE MAEd(Open)

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University of Wolverhampton
Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing

Supervisors: Dr Brendan Bartram and Dr Lydia Lewis

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## Abstract

The decline in modern foreign language (MFL) learning in UK secondary schools is well-researched, particularly from the point of view of language attitudes and motivation (Bartram, 2006b; Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007; Lanvers, Hultgren & Gayton, 2016; Martin, 2019; Lanvers & Martin, 2020), although the role of parents in the MFL learning process is seldom explored. The rationale for the research comes from an extensive appraisal of the literature on foreign language learning education and parental engagement in learning, coupled with teaching experience. Six motivational constructs were explored: general motivation, sense of achievement, internal attribution of success/failure, external attribution of success/failure, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. A mixed-methods research design, employing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, was adopted to explore the impact of parental orientations towards MFL on child motivation from different perspectives. Quantitative analysis shows that there is a strong, positive correlation between parent and child data for five of the six motivation constructs. Inferential statistics show that parental independent variables such as level of general education, level of language education and ethnicity have statistically significant impacts on four student motivation constructs. Results from the interviews indicate that parents had mixed experiences of language learning and that curriculum policies which restrict the option choices for some students could be detrimental to engaging them with learning a language that they choose to learn rather than one that is imposed. Students and parents also presented positive views on the importance of languages for career progression and travel. Improving the dialogue between schools and parents on the importance of language learning through sharing important curriculum information, engaging in careers events and supporting parents for whom languages pose a particular challenge could make a small contribution to changing the current MFL learning climate.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction and Background

*"The limits of my language are the limits of my world"*
*(Wittgenstein, 1975, proposition 5.6)*

## 1.1 Personal statement of interest in the topic

Throughout my teaching career, I have fielded many questions from students on the importance and relevance of learning a foreign language. Furthermore, these same questions were also often posed by parents during parents' meetings and open evenings. The motivation of students in UK secondary schools to learn a modern foreign language is questionable and something that has been well-documented over the last thirty years (Barton, 1997; Bartram, 2006a; Bartram, 2006b; Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007; Jones, 2009; Gayton, 2010; Martin, 2019).

As a teacher of languages, the motivation of my students is pivotal in ensuring that they remain engaged in lessons in order to obtain *at least* a basic, working knowledge of a foreign language and its associated cultures and traditions. The quote by Wittgenstein (1975) which opens this chapter captures perfectly the idea that one's world is delimited by one's language. I believe that every language teacher should try to give students an opportunity to experience the language and culture of another country in order to broaden their horizons and nurture an appreciation of others.

If we are to do this, students need to be supported and motivated throughout the process of learning a language. This is achieved by multi-faceted methods and is dependent on a number of factors coming together: the pivotal idea of cultural capital, encompassing aspects such as teaching and learning in schools and parental engagement and encouragement (Hornsby & Lafaele, 2011; Martin, 2019). All three of these factors should work harmoniously to create an environment that is conducive to supporting

and motivating students towards learning a foreign language. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and the issue of motivation to learn is ever-present in the modern foreign language (MFL) classroom.

As a teacher of modern foreign languages in a secondary school for twelve years, I have observed what I perceive to be a decline in motivation and drive to learn a foreign language and students are vocal in the reasoning for their choice, often citing its difficulty and shadowing the views of their parents. Discussions with parents are particularly interesting as, for many, their experiences of learning a foreign language were not positive and they often state that they were not good at languages at school. This parental discourse is prevalent, particularly in schools which are located in areas of high social deprivation where views on the value of foreign language learning tend to be negative (Lanvers & Martin, 2020).

## 1.2 The changing landscape of MFL teaching in English secondary schools

In order to contextualise the issue of the decline in language learning in English secondary schools, it would be pertinent to provide an historical overview of the English education system. Schooling in England is divided into 'Key Stages' depending on the child's age. Key Stages 1 and 2 (3-10 years) are primary school level and Key Stages 3-5 (11-19 years) are secondary and tertiary level. Children in Key Stage 2 take 'Standardised Attainment Tests' (SATs) at the end of Year 6 (10 years old) and students at the end of Key Stage 4 take either General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations or other vocational qualifications such as Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) accredited courses.

The National Curriculum, first established in 1988 by the Education Reform Act, created a programme of subjects which students would be expected to study. These subjects were divided into *core* and *foundation* subjects. Core subjects consist of English, mathematics and the sciences, and foundation

subjects consist of information technology, design, humanities, creative arts, physical education and modern foreign languages. After the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act, modern foreign languages were compulsory for all students until the National Curriculum Reform of 2004 which saw languages become optional after the age of 14.

Modern foreign languages (MFLs) have been taught as part of school programmes in English secondary schools since as far back as the 1940s and 50s after the significant restructuring of the education system following the Second World War and the inception of the Education Act 1944. More traditionally, Latin and Greek were taught in grammar schools and were only accessible to the social elite. Before the Education Reform Act 1988, schools, school governors and local authorities were at liberty to choose which subjects they delivered to children.

French has been the first language taught in schools due to the close historical ties that have existed between England and France throughout the centuries (McLelland, 2018). It continues to be the most widely taught foreign language in English schools closely followed by German and Spanish. In 2014-15, MFLs were made compulsory in primary schools in England and of the schools surveyed by Board and Tinsley (2015), 77% had chosen French as their language. This has decreased since 2015 to 75% with more primary schools (29%) preferring Spanish as their main language (Tinsley, 2019). A small proportion of primary schools are now beginning to teach other languages such as German (5%), Mandarin Chinese (3%) and Latin (2%) (Tinsley, 2019, p. 4).

Examination entries for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in MFLs have been in steady decline and recent figures suggest that, between 2014 and 2018, the number of examination entries of French have reduced by 49,121 from 166,167 to 117,046, a decline of 30%. According to Tinsley (2019), the number of entries for GCSE Spanish have remained

relatively stable with only a 2% decline. Overall, across all GCSE languages, there has been a 19% drop in entries. At Advanced Level (A level) in England, the picture appears bleaker still with evidence in the decline of numbers taking A level examinations in MFLs dating from the 1990s with only 7,714 students taking French, 2,760 taking German and 7,369 taking Spanish compared to 8,459, 3,446 and 7,455 respectively in 2016 (2018 figures, Tinsley, 2019).

Since the introduction of languages in primary schools, every effort has been made to ensure a consistent approach. It is reported that 81% of primary schools in England have an allotted time in their programmes for the teaching of languages with lessons between 30 and 60 minutes long. There is evidence to suggest, however, that this approach is not always adhered to, leading to inconsistencies in the delivery of foreign languages across English primary schools (Board & Tinsley, 2015; Tinsley, 2019).

A consistent approach is pivotal to ensuring that the transition from primary level to secondary level language learning is as smooth as possible. Where possible, primary feeder schools collaborate with local secondary schools to hold transition days and events in which languages play an integral part. It is suggested, however, that there has been a decline in collaboration between primary and secondary schools from 77% to 53% of schools in England, now reporting collaboration with one another (Tinsley, 2019).

Some senior leaders in secondary schools in England have taken the decision to withdraw certain languages from their curricula with the percentage of schools teaching French decreasing from 94% to 91% between 2015 and 2019 (Tinsley, 2019). This decrease is exacerbated at A level with fewer English schools offering French and even fewer offering German. Spanish, however, appears to be stable in the number of schools offering and numbers remain strong in many cases.

Recent media coverage has aimed to raise awareness of the current crisis in MFL learning. The BBC reported in 2019 that:

> 'Foreign language learning is at its lowest level in UK secondary schools since the turn of the millennium, with German and French falling the most.'

A survey conducted by the BBC in the same year showed that one of the salient reasons for students choosing not to study a language was due to their perceived difficulty of language learning. In Wales and Northern Ireland, the situation is the same with numbers of students falling by 29% and 40% respectively (BBC, 2019). In an interview with the BBC, a UK policy director for a global business stated that:

> 'The decline in language learning in schools must be reversed, or else the UK will be less competitive globally and young people less prepared for the modern world.'

This position is echoed by Tinsley (2019) who believes that Brexit will exacerbate the current situation by 'widening the divide' between socio-economic status and educational attainment with many parents questioning the value of language learning.

## 1.4 Aims of the present study

As previously mentioned, many parents are beginning to question the need for, and the value of, learning a modern foreign language, a subject that remains part of the primary and secondary curriculum in England. This coupled with the decline in students taking a qualification in MFL could point to a sharing of values and beliefs between parents and children on the importance of learning a foreign language. The aim of this study was to

explore any possible associations between parent and student views and experiences in modern foreign language learning (MFLL). This is an exploratory study which approaches language learning experience, not only from a student perspective, but also from a parental viewpoint; a topic which has seldom been researched.

The objectives of this study are threefold:

- to describe the views and experiences of an identified group of students who are forming their attitudes and opinions towards certain subjects in the run-up to choosing their option subjects (aged 12).
- to explore the thoughts and views of these students' parents by asking them to reflect on their own experience of language learning at school and how this shapes their current beliefs and values of MFLL.
- to examine any possible associations between the two groups of participants in order to evaluate the impact that parents have in terms of influencing their child's motivation to learn a language.

Given the exploratory nature of the study, it will take a multifaceted approach by also exploring other possible variables such as gender and socio-economic status through the recruitment of participants from both independent and state secondary schools. This will provide a cross-sectional view of society, encompassing families from wide-ranging socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The present study is based on the views and experiences of students and parents in independent and state secondary schools within the wider West Midlands conurbation but will be presented in a wider educational context, drawing on a wide, international body of knowledge about motivation in foreign language learning and parental engagement in education. Greater levels of clarity will be achieved through a mixed-methods approach, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide data from different perspectives.

## 1.5 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organised into the following chapters: Chapter 2 offers an extensive appraisal of the relevant research literature presented in three themes: foreign language learning motivation, parental engagement in education and cultural capital in education. Chapter 3 provides detailed information about the theoretical and methodological considerations that underpinned this study and guided its conduct. Chapter 4 presents quantitative and qualitative findings that arose from the study along with discussions of the data drawing on relevant literature. Chapter 5 offers tentative conclusions along with possible implications for practice at different levels: teaching and learning, school, curriculum policy, the wider society and theory. This is followed by a short discussion of possible areas for further research and personal reflections on the study.

# Chapter 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

From my experience of being a teacher of MFL in a secondary school for twelve years, the decline in motivation and drive to learn a foreign language is apparent and students are vocal in the reasoning for their choice. Discussions with parents are particularly interesting as, for many, their experiences of learning a foreign language were not positive and they often state that they were not good at languages at school. In my experience, this parental perspective is prevalent, particularly in schools which are located in areas of very high social deprivation with high levels of crime and poor levels of education.

This review of the literature aims to appraise critically the research that exists in the field of motivation studies in secondary modern foreign languages, parental involvement and the role of social and cultural capital in education. Studies conducted in England within the last ten years were favoured in order to ensure that the most recent research was incorporated and where necessary, the search was broadened to include educational contexts abroad. It is important to acknowledge at this point the contextual educational differences of studies conducted abroad, however, their findings offered useful and relatable conceptual value. Less recent seminal works, which are defined as being 'highly original, influential, and important' (Collins Online Dictionary, 2020), were also incorporated, given their conceptual prominence. The review is divided into sections which explore motivation in foreign language education (FLE) from a variety of theoretical perspectives such as self-determination, attribution and cultural capital. These will in turn inform the formulation of research questions for this thesis.

## 2.2 Key motivational theories

As mentioned in the introduction, Wittgenstein (1975) said 'the limits of my language are the limits of my world' (proposition 5.6) which remains a key ontological idea within the field of linguistics and language. From a language learner's perspective, the ability to be able to see the world through a different language and its associated culture and society is transformative in such a way that it gives purpose to the learning taking place.

In the United Kingdom, the teaching of a foreign language has long been compulsory from the age of 11 until 14 (secondary school) and with changes brought in by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition, it was made compulsory at primary school level from the age of seven in 2014. The landscape of language teaching and learning is ever-changing with reforms being made to national curriculum content (September 2014) and qualification reforms (September 2016).

Given these changes, it is becoming apparent that, at policy-making level, there are differences of opinion when it comes to the importance of languages in education. When students and parents see these changes taking place, making languages optional or not part of the curriculum, they could perceive the subject as not important or relevant to themselves. This is echoed by Coleman et al. (2007) who state that making the subject optional post-14 has 'damaged the perceived status, and the introduction of choice has led to a dramatic decline in the take-up of languages' (p. 249).

Before embarking on an appraisal of the literature on motivation, it would be pertinent to first delineate the close relationship between *attitudes* and *motivation*. Previous research studies have experienced difficulties when differentiating between the two terms with many considering the word to be synonymous. Bartram (2010) offers a distinction which draws on definitions from psychological research studies. He suggests that *attitudes* are related

to the cognitive and emotional aspects of doing a task whereas *motivation* is goal-oriented and linked to an individual's behaviour.

Key research into motivation theory and second language acquisition stems from Gardner and Lambert's work (1972) which generated a theory for approaching the study of motivation from a social-psychological perspective. The social-psychological and socio-educational approaches aimed to ground research into motivation in a scientific framework through positivist methods and the use of standardised assessment techniques and instruments. Additionally, they recognised that motivation could be considered 'instrumental' or 'integrative'. Learners with instrumental motivation wish to learn a language for practical reasons such as career promotion or a salary increase. Integratively-motivated learners wish to learn a language in order to better understand the culture of the country. Gardner and Lambert postulated that learners who were integratively motivated tended to be more successful language learners than those who were instrumentally motivated. This could be due to integratively-motivated learners possessing stronger intrinsic motivation and possibly an affiliation to the target language country than instrumentally-motivated learners (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

According to Dörnyei (1994), Gardner and Lambert's work was so influential that it remained the main theoretical framework for motivation research for a number of years. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) go on to suggest that it was too influential and that other possible approaches had not been considered. As research progressed in the field, it became apparent that the same findings were being reported - that motivation of English school children to learn a foreign language was declining and that there was a discernible difference between the motivation of boys and girls (Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Wright, 1999; Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002; Coleman et al., 2007; Lanvers, Hultgren & Gayton, 2016). It appears that the majority of the research has been conducted at what Gayton (2016) terms the 'micro-level' which focuses on the student and the immediate classroom as the unit of

investigation and that little research has been conducted on the 'meso' and 'macro' levels (p. 4). Gayton (2016) defines the 'meso' level as home and the wider school, and 'macro' is defined on a more societal and global scale. When considering my own theoretical position, I believe that there is more to think about when investigating human behaviour as it is a complex construct that is influenced by other external factors.

Dörnyei has conducted research into motivation and foreign language education (FLE) using a 'process-oriented approach' (2000, 2003) and his work is cited by many other researchers in the field of motivation studies and second language acquisition. His initial work builds on the psychological approach pioneered by Gardner and Lambert (1972) in Canada and he has conducted a number of studies into motivation and foreign language learning, both alone (Dörnyei, 1990; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2008), and with other scholars in the field such as Csizer (1998, 2002) and more recently Ushioda (2011).

There is a considerable conceptual gap between Gardner and Lambert's work and that of Dörnyei and his colleagues. A resurgence in second language motivation studies happened in the 1990s due to researchers recognising inadequacies in Gardner and Lambert's social-psychological approach. They believed that it did not offer a deep enough insight into the classroom practices and perceptions of teachers. Consequently, researchers called for a more classroom-centred, pragmatic approach to researching motivation in second language classrooms which is where Dörnyei's process-oriented approach (Dörnyei, 2000) made a substantial impact and remained the key approach adopted by researchers (Williams et al., 2002; Broady, 2005; Bartram, 2006a, 2006b; Coleman et al., 2007; Martin, 2019).

From Gardner and Lambert's initial research into motivation until Dörnyei's contribution to the field, the focus remained on the individual and their perceptions of the possible external factors affecting motivation. The

researchers who recognised the inadequacies in Gardner and Lambert's approach realised that there were so many other factors that needed to be taken into consideration given the complexity of what was being investigated. The previous research neglected both the dynamic and temporal variation in motivation. Motivation is a complex construct that is potentially transient in nature – motivation can change not only according to the task that is being given but also due to time. In some instances, it is possible for a student's motivation to change in a single lesson with fluctuating levels of commitment being displayed throughout this time (Wright, 1999; Dörnyei, 2003).

Dörnyei approaches his research from psychological and linguistic perspectives. He is an advocate of using questionnaires and the majority of his research papers use this research tool to gather data. The questionnaires that he uses are developed from the 'Attitude/Motivation Test Battery' or AMTB questionnaire initially created by Gardner and Lambert (1985) and is the question bank that most motivation studies researchers turn to when devising questionnaires. His process-oriented approach (Dörnyei, 2000) took into consideration the dynamic nature of motivation and this was addressed by including questions that investigated the classroom practices and perceptions of teachers. Dörnyei's own research is predominantly quantitative (1990; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2008) whereas his co-researched studies adopt a mixed-method approach (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Dörnyei and Ushioda go on to suggest that further research into motivation and foreign language education would be most effective if a mixed-method approach were to be adopted, hence the choice of this methodology for the present study.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has since been used as a conceptual framework for understanding the motivation of individuals from a psychological perspective. Pioneered by Ryan and Deci (1985, 2000), SDT postulates that for individuals to be engaged and motivated, three key

psychological conditions need to be met – competence, autonomy and relatedness. *Competence* refers to an individual's self-efficacy in completing a given task and *autonomy* is when an individual feels competent enough to complete a task with little or no support from others and have a sense of volition. Finally, *relatedness* refers to the extent to which the task is related to an individual's learning and how connected they feel to others (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) mention the role of social environments impacting on an individual's motivation, stating that they 'catalyze' [sic] both within - and between - person differences in motivation and personal growth' (p. 68). Schools as a social environment, play a key role in fostering the right conditions within which individuals can fulfil the needs stated by Ryan and Deci (2000) for motivation and positive engagement.

Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest three key types of motivation: amotivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. The three types of motivation were considered as a continuum where an individual is able to move between different 'motivations' depending on the conditions in which they found themselves. Figure 1 shows the continuum proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000) along with other contextual factors.

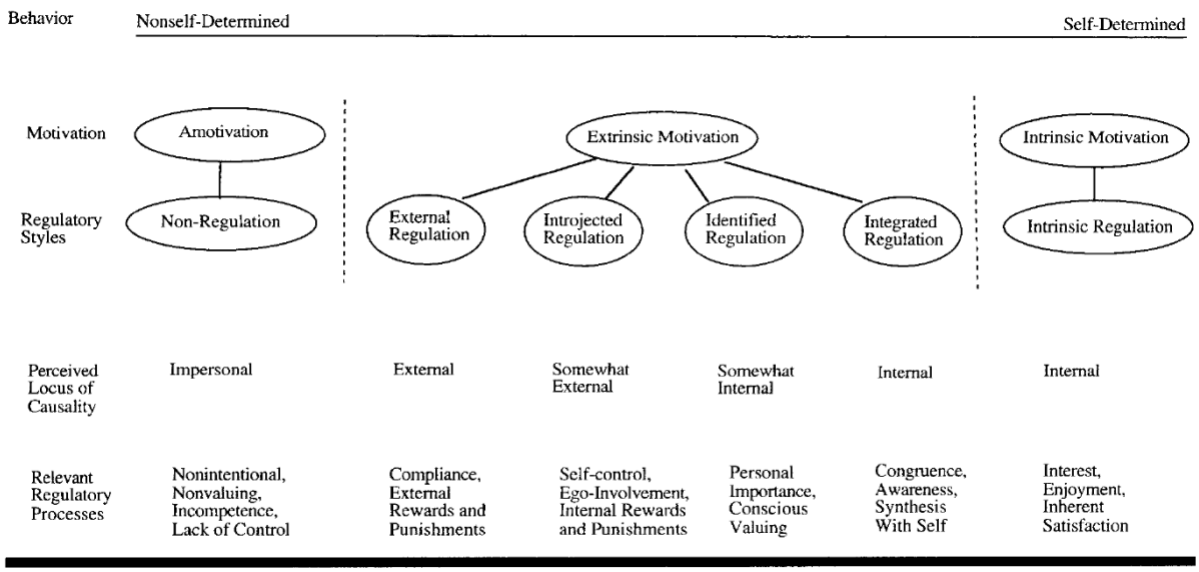



*Figure 1 Self-Determination Continuum (Ryan & Deci, 2000)*

This theory incorporates elements of Weiner's (1985, 1986) theory of Attribution which considers an individual's locus of causality (internal or external). The diagram shows the perceived locus of causality for an individual who exhibits amotivation, for whom the task at hand has no value, and they are not competent at fulfilling the task. They also feel that they have no control over the task, therefore lacking any intention to participate.

Extrinsic motivation has the widest spread of the continuum with varying degrees of loci of causality; external, somewhat external, somewhat internal and internal. An external locus of causality usually means that individuals are motivated to fulfil a task due to compliance, external rewards or possibly punishments. At the other end of the extrinsic motivation continuum, an internal locus of causality means that the individual has an awareness of the value of the task and is considered the most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation. Although some of these descriptions may align with aspects of intrinsic motivation, they are still thought to be extrinsic due to fulfilling tasks to accomplish specific outcomes rather than for their innate satisfaction.

Intrinsic motivation is at the far right of the continuum and is considered to have a fully internal locus of causality. It is defined by Ryan and Deci (1985) as:

> 'the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn' (p. 70).

It is widely acknowledged by developmental psychologists that from birth, children are dynamic, inquisitive and playful, even in the absence of incentive (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wilding, 2015; Al-Dhamit & Kreishan, 2016) and these values are important to the social and cognitive development of children. It is also recognised that these qualities require certain conditions which support them and can also be unsettled by non-supportive conditions.

These conditions can be considered internal or external according to Weiner (1985, 1986).

Weiner (1985) proposed a theory of motivation which considered causal attributions guided by three key properties; locus, stability and controllability. He suggested that motivation can be affected by internal and external factors which can be stable or unstable. Figure 2 shows the internal/external stable/unstable structure.

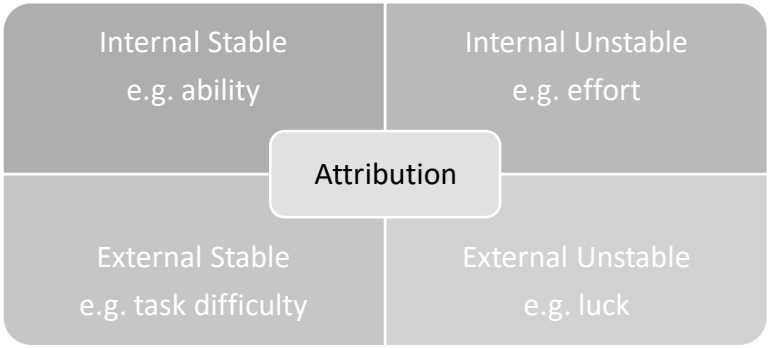



*Figure 2 Weiner's Causal Structure (1985)*

Internal attributions are considered inherent within an individual and to some extent can be controlled. An example of this would be ability – this is a constant capacity within an individual which is internal and stable. Conversely, effort and mood are also internal to the individual; however, they are unstable and more variable, changing throughout time. External factors exist independently of the individual but with varying degrees of controllability. Task difficulty is given as an example by Weiner (1985) as an external stable attribute – the task is external to the individual and stable as the difficulty of the task can be controlled. External unstable attributes are beyond an individual's control, an example of which is pure luck as offered by Weiner (1985). Pure luck is considered external unstable since it cannot be controlled and exists externally of the individual.

Attribution theory has played a more dominant role in recent research in motivation and offers a deeper understanding of how individuals attribute certain factors to their success or failure in a task (Lightbody et al., 1996; Siann et al., 1996; Hsieh & Kang, 2010). Given its heuristic nature, it can be applied to foreign language learning in which ability, effort and task difficulty could impact significantly on a student's motivation.

## 2.3 New millennium, new language strategies

Since the introduction of the National Curriculum during the late 1980s, it became clear that the motivation of English native speakers to learn a foreign language was an issue (Broady, 2005; Bartram, 2006a, 2006b; Coleman et al., 2007; Coleman, 2009). A number of 'National Strategies' were implemented by the government in order to improve the situation of the decline in students studying a language post-14 (GCSE-level). In 2004, a government report was released which outlined possible reforms to 14-19 qualifications which proposed the introduction of a 'language ladder' (DfES, 2004). It also proposed that schools keep their statutory offer of modern foreign languages from 14-16. However, following the Dearing Languages Review in 2006, languages were made optional for all students going into Key Stage 4 (Languages for all, languages for life, DFE, 2007) and languages were made compulsory from Key Stage 2 at primary level in 2014. However, MFLs would go on to form an integral part of the new English Baccalaureate qualification in 2010 (The Importance of Teaching, DFE, 2010). Interestingly, several studies into motivation were conducted at the time of these language strategies being implemented (Williams et al., 2002; Coleman et al., 2007; Coleman, 2009; Jones, 2009; Coleman 2011).

Williams et al. (2002) conducted research at the micro-level by focusing on student perceptions of the issues related to motivation, employing a mixed-methods research design bringing together qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. They concluded that motivation decreases with age, with

students arriving at secondary school being motivated to learn, and as they progress into Years 8 and 9 their motivation decreases. The researchers also stated that there was a discernible difference in motivation levels according to gender and also the languages being learnt; this is more notable when only boys are considered since there is a marked difference in the increase of motivation of boys to learn German rather than French. This study also drew on questions from the AMTB (Gardner & Lambert, 1985) which continued to be pivotal in researching motivation. The data from the questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and this was supplemented with richer data from interview transcriptions. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide different dimensions to the study would point to the usefulness of adopting a mixed-method approach, as suggested by Dörnyei (2001).

At the time of the new language strategy in 2007, Coleman et al. (2007) conducted further research into the motivation of Key Stage 3 students (aged 11-14). This was considerably larger in scale than that of Williams et al. (2002) and came at a time when it became optional to learn a foreign language at GCSE level. As the study had a much larger sample size of 10,400 compared to 228, this promised to give a much more representative snapshot of the motivation of Key Stage 3 students to learn a foreign language. The study confirmed what researchers and professionals previously thought; gender, age and school type play an important role in affecting the motivation of students to learn a foreign language, and it offered a more up-to-date view of the motivational landscape in MFL learning at that time.

As suggested by Gayton (2016), research into motivation can be seen on three levels; micro, meso and macro. The studies mentioned so far in this review are on the micro level with a focus remaining on the student and their perceptions as the unit of investigation. Research at the meso level emerges with studies looking at parental and familial influences on attitudes

to learn a foreign language. Bartram (2006b, 2010) examined the perceptions of parental influence on attitudes to language learning. At first glance, this qualitative study sheds light on the possible influences that parents have on their child's language learning, however the sought-after perceptions were those of the students themselves which would, again, point to a micro-level study.

An example of a true meso-level study was by Jones (2009) who investigated the parental support and the attitudes of boys and girls to modern foreign languages. Again, this study focused on something that was already highlighted to be a concern; the difference in motivation according to gender. However, Jones took it a step further by incorporating data collected from teachers and more importantly, parents. This study focused on a particular area of northern England near Darlington and was conducted by the Children's Services Department of Darlington Borough Council. The scale of this study was small with only two schools participating in the research, however, this study was instrumental in beginning to understand the role of parents by incorporating data collected from parents themselves rather than a reliance on student perceptions of their parents' involvement.

It becomes increasingly difficult to find articles that are written about meso-level studies, which confirms my earlier statement about a clear gap in the research literature. In order to broaden my reading of meso-level research into motivation, it was necessary to widen my search parameters to include studies conducted abroad.

Tam (2009) conducted a study exploring the contributions of family and classroom processes to motivating young people to learn a second language. This study was based in Hong Kong and had over 2,200 students and family members participating. Drawing on Dörnyei's process-oriented approach (2003), Tam was able to investigate the impact of a number of external variables on motivation, namely classroom and family processes. The data

were collected by questionnaires to both students and family members and were analysed quantitatively with no qualitative analysis included in the findings. Complex statistical analysis was used to highlight correlations between family and classroom processes and motivation which provided the opportunity to substantiate their findings. The addition of qualitative data in the form of interviews or open-ended questions would have given further depth and greater understanding of the family processes that impact the motivation of children in school. The findings highlighted interesting parallels with the situation in the UK in that low income or poverty were often identified as factors influencing parenting and child competence at school. This is confirmed by Gayton (2010) who conducted comparative research into socio-economic status and language learning motivation in Scotland and two European countries.

Gayton's study (2010) was a true meso-level study which focused on data collected from eleven interviews of teachers from three different countries; Scotland, Germany and France. The purpose of gathering data from Germany and France was to aid comparison of situations where English is the pupils' mother tongue and the other where English is the pupils' second language. The investigation was based on connections between a pupil's socio-economic status and their language learning motivation as perceived by teachers. In comparison with Tam (2009), Gayton's study was polar opposite in terms of data analysis and was purely qualitative in nature.

Content analysis of the interviews highlighted three key areas for discussion; the general situation of language learning in Scotland, the differences between English as a first language and English as a second language, and language learning and mobility. Conclusions from the study made an indirect connection between socio-economic status and language learning. Gayton supports a claim by Ausubel (1968) stating that there is a tendency for parents of a lower socio-economic status to give less time and resources to their child's education in comparison with parents who value education

greatly and have a higher socio-economic status. It is clear, however, that language learning and the decline in motivation is not just an issue in England, but in Scotland also where language learning is compulsory at the senior phase.

More recently, Lanvers, Hultgren and Gayton (2016) investigated possible ways of changing students' attitudes to learning a language by teaching linguistics. As highlighted by this study, none of the language strategies or interventions put into place have aimed to change students' attitudes by raising their awareness of the cognitive benefits of multilingualism, for example. The study proposed an intervention in the form of a series of classes or lectures and a teaching pack which included materials for teaching students about the benefits of being multilingual. Students were given questionnaires both before and after the intervention had taken place in order to see any noticeable differences in responses. A mixed-method approach was adopted incorporating statistical analysis of Likert scale data and qualitative data from an open feedback session after the intervention took place. The results showed that girls were clearly more fascinated by information about the cognitive effects of language learning whereas the boys were more fascinated by facts about world languages. Also, the questionnaire data highlighted that students found the subject difficult and Lanvers et al. (2016) hypothesised that the changes in attitudes brought about from the intervention could have a potentially positive impact on the image of languages being a hard subject. The implications of this study could be far-reaching as they offer possible ways for teachers to raise the profile of languages through promoting the benefits of being multilingual and raising the general linguistic awareness of students.

Lanvers et al. (2016) take their research a step further by investigating the engagement of other school stakeholders in 'teaching languages to instil the love of learning' (p. 1). Lanvers (2016) conducted a study that involved school management as well as teachers and students. Motivation can be

affected by the school ethos and if the ethos does not place importance on foreign language learning, this could impact negatively on motivation. Lanvers' (2016) study approached the senior leaders of four UK secondary schools and examined what they thought about the rationale of teaching and learning languages and the possible future of languages. The study was qualitative in nature and involved the use of interviews and focus groups in order to gather rich descriptions of thoughts and experiences of the senior leaders, teachers and students. It is clear from the findings that senior management placed a lot of emphasis on the rationale for teaching modern languages and its impact on overall academic performance and league tables. They also mentioned the potential difficulties in providing effective modern languages provision due to the declining numbers of students studying languages at university level (Coleman, 2004).

Teachers involved in the Lanvers (2016) study were able to articulate a wide range of rationales in terms of language teaching pedagogy and the challenges that they are faced with such as severe grade boundaries, marking and 'teaching to the exam'. The students saw languages, first and foremost, instrumentally in terms of the advantages that they could bring professionally and also offered a range of ideas on language pedagogy which would point to these students having an interest in their language learning. Senior leadership may have a vision for the future of modern languages in schools, however this vision is driven by the pressure of league table performance and the challenges that schools face in terms of recruiting suitably qualified staff. Due to these pressures, school leaders often take the decision to make languages optional thus changing the perceived status of the subject within the curriculum.

Gayton (2016) discusses a theoretical framework that is born from a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) perspective. She agrees that a CDST approach provides a valuable insight into the beliefs and values of teachers and seeing the classroom as a 'complex system'. Research studies

adopting this perspective are more recent (Feyrok, 2010; Burns and Knox, 2011; Henry, 2014; Ushioda, 2014) as this is a relatively new approach to investigating motivation in a classroom environment and the values that are attached to teachers' beliefs. Gayton (2016) argues that teachers' roles in developing language learning motivation theory have been largely unnoticed in previous studies and that they are pivotal to understanding the link between language pedagogy and the dynamics of motivation. Teachers are a valuable resource as they are role models of the successful 'L2 self' (p. 3) and if there is a lack of successful L2 role model at home, this role becomes even more vital in motivating learners (Taylor et al., 2013; Taylor, 2013; Taylor 2014; Taylor & Marsden, 2014).

The field of motivation studies in language education has seen many studies conducted with the student or individual as the sole unit of investigation. This has been the case for a number of years, with Gardner and Lambert's social-psychological approach (1972) being the preferred framework for investigation. It was noted in the literature that this approach has been influential throughout to the point of being overly dominant and only exploring motivational factors from the perspective of the learner.

Using Gayton's terminology of micro, meso and macro levels of investigation (2016), it becomes clear that the amount of research conducted at meso and macro levels becomes less and this indicates a possible gap in the existing research literature. Whilst there are studies that have been conducted at meso and macro levels, they are few and far between and often refer to classroom or family contexts outside of the United Kingdom.

## 2.4 Parental involvement in education

Having established an overview of motivation in foreign language learning, it is now pertinent to explore the role of parents in their children's education. There is a degree of semantic fluidity that exists in the literature resulting in

'parental involvement' and 'parental engagement' often being used synonymously. Parental involvement (PI) can be defined as 'parental participation and engagement in the educational processes and experiences of their children' (Jeynes, 2007, p. 83).

This definition is based on the most prominent research and theories that have arisen in this field. Previous studies have used various definitions of parental involvement and have yielded differing and sometimes conflicting results. The most commonly cited study is that of Epstein (1995) which defined parental involvement as having six aspects: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community (p. 85). McNeal (2001) proposed reducing these aspects to four main dimensions; parent-child discussion, monitoring, involvement in school and classroom activities, and participation in school organisation. Due to the lack of a common definition of PI, a further study by Johnson and Hull (2014) concluded that the previous frameworks proposed in other studies could be summarised into three core areas: home-based involvement, school-based involvement and parents' educational aspirations (p. 407).

It has been well-documented that students' educational outcomes are determined not only by their own characteristics such as abilities, cognitive styles and personality traits but by interactions with the wider society, particularly with teachers, peers and most importantly, parents (Jeynes, 2007; Jones, 2009; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Bubić & Tošić, 2016; Cabus & Ariës, 2017).

Earlier studies into parental involvement in education have highlighted that engagement can manifest itself in different types of parental activities, such as preparing children for school, imparting good learning habits e.g. completing homework in good time, communication with school about activities taking place and other obligations, for example attending parents'

consultation meetings and open evenings. The extent to which parents become involved in the education of their child is influenced by their own perceived abilities, knowledge and beliefs in self-efficacy to support their child's learning and cultural capital. It is also determined by how the parent(s) perceive invitations offered by the school to participate in school-related activities. If a parent has a positive attitude and displays high expectations of the school in providing a safe and secure environment in which their child learns, their child tends to have more favourable outcomes compared to those whose parents have a more negative view towards the school (Bubić & Tošić, 2016).

The benefits which are afforded by greater parental involvement include improved parent/teacher relationships, improved school attendance, attitudes and behaviour to learning and general increased parental confidence and interest in their child's learning and education (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Johnson & Hull, 2014). This interest could be shown in home-based parental involvement such as listening to children read and close homework supervision and communicating parents' own expectations and aspirations for their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Cabus & Ariës, 2017). Parental involvement in homework can be seen as an 'active form' of involvement (Cabus & Ariës, 2017) as parents are investing time and effort into supporting their child with their learning outside of the classroom and creating a home learning environment that is supportive and promotes good learning habits.

In terms of studies conducted on parental involvement in foreign language education, these are few and far between (Bartram, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Jones 2009) with most articles published abroad based on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Tam, 2009; Forey, Besser & Sampson, 2016). Other areas which focus on parental involvement include mathematics and science education (Wilder, 2017; Huang & Liang, 2016) and early childhood

education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Roksa & Potter, 2011; Cabus & Ariës, 2017; Hill, Witherspoon & Bartz, 2018).

An appraisal of this literature points to the same salient features of effective parental involvement in education: active involvement with homework, creating a supportive environment for extending learning beyond the classroom, engagement with school obligations and activities, high expectations of the school and involvement in school governance. Some studies, however, also highlight potential barriers to effective parental involvement (Jeynes, 2007; Jones 2009; Tam, 2009; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Forey et al., 2016). Gardner (1985) suggests that parents could play an active or passive role in their child's language learning depending on their beliefs and values placed on MFL learning. According to Bartram (2010, p.66) positive active engagement could include the 'monitoring' of a child's language learning progress and having positive discussions about languages in general. Conversely, negative active engagement could involve overtly devaluing languages in the presence of their child and displaying undesirable behaviours towards learning a language. The passive role of parents in the language learning process is more related to a parent's attitudes towards the target language (TL) community such as France or Spain. Parents who display positive attitudes towards a certain TL community are more likely to be supportive of their child's learning of that particular language. Contrariwise, those parents who are negative towards this community are less inclined to support their child's learning of the language.

Barriers to effective parental involvement can stem from a number of contributing factors such as societal, individual parent and family factors, parent-teacher relationships and the child themselves. Hornby and Lafaele (2011, p. 39) summarise these factors well using a model (Figure 3) which shows the relationship between them.

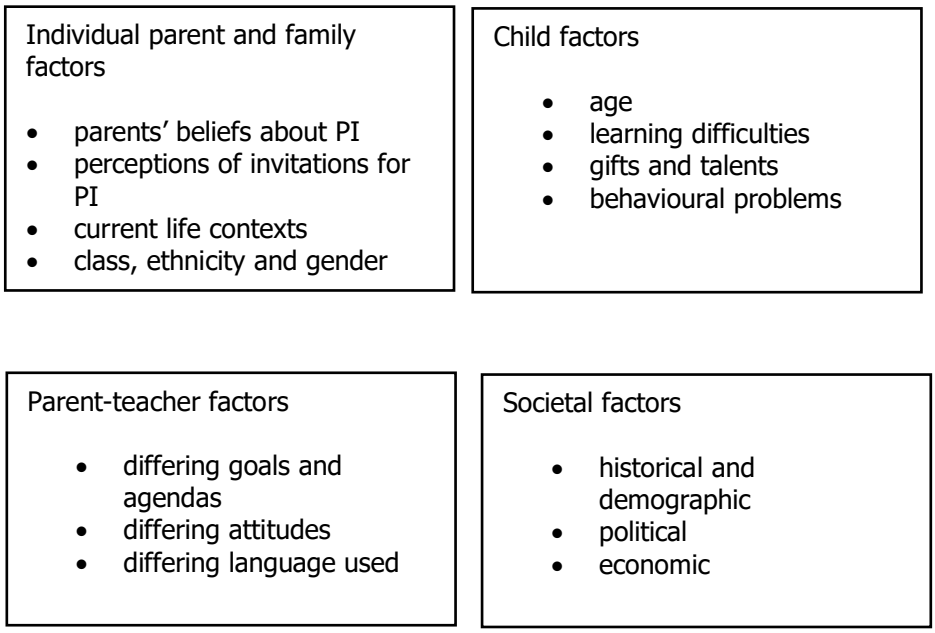



*Figure 3 Model of factors causing barriers to effective parental involvement - Hornby and Lafaele (2011)*

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) consider these factors and how they impact on parents' ability to involve themselves in the education of their child. These factors were also discussed in Jeynes (2007) where demands such as single-parent working families, family dissolution and other social and economic pressures can have a discernible impact on parental involvement.

Pressures such as working single-parent families could be a potential barrier to effective parental involvement due to the necessity to work and earn to keep the family financially stable. This is noted in Tam (2009) who confirms that parental motivation to become involved in their child's education and learning decreases for parents in poor socio-economic and disadvantaged communities. Hill et al. (2018) take this further and look at how families from diverse backgrounds use other strategies for involvement such as parents using stories about sacrificing their education to bring up a family. Some ethnic minority families even expose their children to manual labour in order to highlight the importance and value of education. This strategy of involvement has an almost 'reverse-psychological' effect with children

wishing to achieve well in order to give something back to their parents for their sacrifice.

It has been suggested that socio-economic factors can influence the support offered by parents and can have a negative impact on their child's attitudes towards learning MFL (Jones, 2009; Gayton 2010). Languages can be seen as having a low status in our society (Coleman et al., 2007; Coleman, 2004; Coleman, 2009; Coleman, 2011) and this brings a perceived lack of value of language skills, particularly by those of a lower socio-economic status (Gayton, 2010; Jones 2009).

As Gayton (2010) states, socio-economic status (SES) can play a significant part in how parents perceive their involvement in education. Its effects can be positive and negative as noted by Sacker, Schoon & Bartley (2002) who state that involvement in families with a low SES is affected negatively through 'material deprivation' (p. 42) yet it can have a positive effect through parents wanting a better life for their children than what they had themselves. Sacker et al. (2002) have argued that, in terms of parental involvement, families from a low SES tend to place less value on education than families from the middle classes and are therefore less likely to participate. They go on to suggest that some parents may also lack the social capital to navigate – and know about – the involvement processes in their child's education. Although such assertions may be contested, parents of children from a working-class family may not feel intellectually equipped themselves to support the demands of their child's schooling. These ideas will be revisited in the next section in relation to theories of cultural capital. As highlighted by Nechyba, McEwan and Older-Aguilar (1999), a further barrier to parental involvement is the limitation placed on a parent's time be it through work commitments or the upkeep of the family home.

Whilst the majority of the research cited here focuses on parental involvement from a parent-child perspective, it is necessary to look at how

this involvement is affected from a parent-teacher position. It has been noted in previous studies that effective communication between the school and parent facilitates involvement in a child's education (Jeynes, 2007; Jones, 2009; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Bubić & Tošić, 2016; Cabus & Ariës, 2017), however it is interesting to note that the parent-teacher relationship could be perceived negatively, particularly by parents with a low SES (see Crozier, 1999). Crozier's study concluded that parents with a low SES saw teachers as superior due to them interacting and engaging with the parents on their own terms. This creates a perception of distance and hierarchy to which some parents react negatively thus hindering any kind of proactive involvement with their child's school.

It can be said that some parents get involved in their child's education more than others. The extent to which this involvement manifests is dependent as stated previously on factors such as socio-economic status, the value placed on education and parents feeling ill-equipped to support the educational demands of their child's development, i.e. poor perceptions of self-efficacy and lack of understanding of *how* they can be involved with their child's learning (Ball, Bowe & Gerwirtz, 1995; Nechyba et al., 1999). Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) further extend the list of potential barriers to effective parental involvement to include the effects of domestic violence and learnt behaviour at home, substance abuse at home (including alcoholism), the impact of difficult behaviour displayed by the child and inappropriate beliefs and values placed on education by some parents. It is clear from this list that there are many challenges that could impede effective parental involvement and that the challenges are multidimensional.

Parental self-efficacy in terms of supporting foreign language education has been scarcely researched. Jones (2009) researched parental support and the attitudes of children to modern foreign languages (MFL). The outcomes of this research point to little evidence being available of any correlation between poor academic performance in MFL learning and negative parental

attitudes towards target language communities and their respective languages. Jones goes on to suggest that a research focus specifically on parents is warranted in order to find out if there is indeed any correlation between parental attitudes towards MFL and their child's academic performance in the subject. Jones and Jones (2001) suggest that parents do not attach importance to MFL as a subject and this perceived indifference from parents can impact on their child's attitudes. Parents are the first source of cultural and ethnic attitudes which are transmitted to children throughout their childhood (Bourdieu, 1986), until such a time as the child is able to form their own cultural and ethnic attitudes.

It is important to note that the majority of the research studies in this section of the review were conducted in an American context and are dated in terms of the data sets that were used. The majority of the studies were conducted within the last two decades and this could indicate a lack of up-to-date empirical research within this field. Furthermore, the information gathered from these studies involved the use of parent surveys to collect qualitative data. As with all subjective data, caution needs to be exercised as to the validity due to parents possibly over-reporting their involvement with schools. Their perceived involvement could be different from the perceptions of other stakeholders such as the students themselves, their teachers or the headteachers.

Studies that were conducted within the UK, and of a similar scale, arrive at the same conclusions as those conducted in the United States; the degree of parental involvement is affected by social class, the level of maternal academic qualifications and the age and ability of the child (Hornby & Lafaele, 2016; Hall et al., 2018). Parental involvement weakens as the child grows older with more emphasis being placed on aspirations as opposed to academic outcomes. It also weakens through the stability of the family unit, for example single-parent family status, ill health or disability.

Although parental involvement can take many forms, it is the impact of 'at-home' involvement that is the greatest with parents modelling aspirations, good learning habits and creating an environment in which children can continue their learning at home. This situation tends to manifest in families from a greater SES (Crozier, 1999; Nechyba et al., 1999; Sacker et al., 2002).

The extent to which parents become involved with their child's education at home can be seen as dependent on where the child is within the education system (primary, middle, secondary, college or university) (Costa & Faria, 2017). It was noted by Costa and Faria (2017) that involvement decreased as the child progressed through the education system and when they arrive at secondary school, the involvement decreases further as the subject knowledge required to support their child goes beyond that of the parent(s). It was reported that becoming involved in homework support was easier when the child was in primary or middle school education where parents were able to study with their child and provide guidance when answering questions that a child found difficult.

The issue surrounding homework involvement made the national press with a number of articles being published on the difficulties that parents encounter when supporting their child with homework. Whilst previous research suggests that parental involvement with homework has a positive impact on the child's academic achievement, two articles published in the Telegraph newspaper, reporting on research studies conducted by Pearson publishers, appeared to state the contrary that supporting children in secondary education with their homework can have adverse effects on their learning, including a possible decrease in grades. The first Pearson study report, published in January 2013 stated that parents are struggling with supporting their child who has primary school-level mathematics homework. It was reported that over half of the sample of parents involved in the study lacked the confidence to help their child with simple mathematics questions.

The article goes on to say that mathematics was rated the second hardest subject for parents to help with *after* French.

A further report, published by the Telegraph in March 2014, stated that research in the United States pointed to no discernible connection between parental participation in homework and improved student outcomes. In fact, the journalist noted that it could have the opposite effect of bringing down grades. The article goes on to mention a comparable UK study conducted in January 2014 by BETT (British Educational Training and Technology) that pointed out that some parents found their child's homework too hard and over two thirds of the participants stated that, at times, they felt unable to help.

It could be suggested that parental involvement in a child's education is multi-faceted and complex. This could be due to researchers having difficulty defining parental involvement due to its complexity and the number of variables which interact. There are many interpretations as to what constitutes parental involvement and different viewpoints and approaches to researching this phenomenon will yield very varied (and sometimes conflicting) results.

In summary, research into parental involvement has highlighted a number of ways in which PI can be approached: involvement with homework, creating an effective home-learning environment, engaging with involvement opportunities at school such as governance and attending parent-teacher meetings. The extent to which parents engage with these involvement opportunities are dependent on external demands such as work commitments, larger families with several children, single-parent families, low socio-economic status and material deprivation, and overall values and beliefs towards education. Social class plays a pivotal role in the extent to which parents become involved in their child's education. Reay (2000) reported that it is predominantly working class women who had negative

experiences of education who find it hard to engage and become involved with their child's learning due to lack of emotional and cultural resources available to them.

There are significant implications for my own research which will involve investigating parental involvement in foreign language learning. Greater care will be required as to which definition of parental involvement I adopt given the numerous definitions that have been suggested by previous studies and the different potential outcomes dependent on which approach I take.

## 2.5 Cultural Capital Theory in education

As mentioned in the previous section, cultural capital plays an integral role in parental involvement in their children's education. It would be relevant, therefore, to provide a more detailed view of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (1986) and its importance in the education process. The present study focused on cultural capital in the broadest sense in order to incorporate modern interpretations of Bourdieu's theories on cultural reproduction, including emotion in the form of support from parents, self-confidence in terms of perceptions of ability to complete a task and the notion of life capital which encompasses these interpretations (Consoli, 2020).

There has been a substantial number of quantitative studies conducted into the causal relationship between cultural capital and educational attainment and a key underlying issue that has arisen from these studies is the theoretical vagueness (Jæger, 2011; Gaddis, 2013) of the concept of 'cultural capital'. Some scholars see cultural capital as a 'physical' or 'real' resource upon which individuals can draw in order to fulfil their place in society (Krarup & Munk, 2016). These 'real' resources could include participation in high-status cultural activities such as going to the theatre or possessing a musical instrument such as a piano at home. Other resources

that have been considered as indicators of cultural capital include educational resources such as access to literature, dictionaries at home and parental reading practices. Given the multiple interpretations as to what constitutes cultural capital, many studies have limited the list of variables to the ones mentioned above. These variables have been taken to be key indicators of cultural capital and have formed the basis of most quantitative research into the field of cultural capital and educational attainment (Jæger, 2011; Huang & Liang, 2016; Krarup & Munk, 2016).

Traditionally, cultural capital is considered to take three forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. The embodied form of cultural capital takes into consideration the values and beliefs embedded in cultural practices. The objectified form is that of material cultural possessions such as books, dictionaries, art and music. The institutionalised form takes into consideration educational outcomes such as qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Research into cultural capital and social reproduction theory has tended to adopt these three forms as means of operationalising cultural capital and has dominated quantitative studies (Dumais, 2002; Tramonte & Willms, 2010; Jæger, 2011; Huang & Liang, 2016; Krarup & Munk, 2016).

Whilst the general consensus in Cultural Capital Theory (CCT) is to see cultural capital as three forms, Tramonte and Willms (2010) take a different view by seeing it as two forms: static and relational. The static form represents the high-brow cultural activities and practices of parents, whereas the relational form represents the cultural interactions between parents and their children. They posit that, as with most studies on social mobility, academic outcomes and occupational goals are determined, in the main, by a person's family origin and experiences in school. It could be suggested that, regardless of the definitions of cultural capital, the research literature arrives at the same conclusions, that children from families of higher socio-economic status adapt better to educational norms due to their parents investing 'capital' into their cultural and social development.

Since Bourdieu's seminal work on capitals and habitus in 1977 and 1986, researchers have strived to quantify the extent to which cultural capital influences various social domains, more notably in the field of education. The effects of cultural capital on educational credentials of individuals from varying socio-economic backgrounds have been well-researched and, for many, the conclusions were very much the same. One reason for these repeating conclusions could be due to the way cultural capital was operationalised within these studies.

Quantitative studies look to quantify and measure variables and one way to do this is to operationalise cultural capital in ways that could be easily quantified; number of times attending 'high-cultural' events, engaging with literature through reading practices, attendance at cultural classes (art, music or theatre) (DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997; Sullivan, 2001). This could be seen as a reductionist view and this operationalisation is contestable in narrowly aligning artistic pursuits with cultural capital. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, tend to examine in greater descriptive detail the extent to which educational knowledge is transmitted to children from their parents in areas such as college admission procedures, parent-teacher interactions and social differences in family-school relations (McDonough, 1997; Reay, 1998; Lareau, 1989). It is the vagueness of Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital that has led to multiple operationalisations and interpretations of his theory.

DiMaggio (1982) is considered to be an influential study in the field of cultural capital theory. His quantitative study aimed to measure cultural capital and its impact on students' grades in American high schools. The study sought to derive models (cultural reproduction and cultural mobility) in order to predict and quantify the impact of cultural capital on the educational outcomes of high school students using a number of possible 'indicators' which represent cultural capital. These indicators were selected by DiMaggio himself and included visiting museums, attending music concerts and

engaging with reading literature. Whilst this study strived for objectivity in terms of measurement of the potential impact of cultural capital on educational outcomes, the very action of choosing possible indicators of cultural capital was inherently subjective due to the lack of definition provided by Bourdieu.

DiMaggio's study draws on an existing data source called TALENT which gathered survey data from participants (n=2,906) who were in the eleventh grade in 1960 (the equivalent to Year 12 or the first year of Sixth Form in the United Kingdom). It is also important to point out that DiMaggio's sample, which claimed to be random, only consisted of *white* American high school students. There is no explanation in the paper for this choice, however it could be questioned as to whether this is seen as a true representation of the student demographic in American high schools. It must also be noted that this study took place over 50 years ago but is still considered as one of the ground-breaking studies into cultural capital theory and education. More recently, Reay (2000, 2004, 2005, 2007) has examined closely the concept of cultural and emotional capital within the context of supporting children's education. She asserts that mothers exhibit a greater investment emotionally in supporting their child's learning beyond the classroom compared to fathers. Mothers are also key to their children's accrual of cultural capital as previously stated by Bourdieu (1986) and confirmed by Reay (2000). This gendered view of parental involvement holds the mother at the centre of the generation of cultural capital and as the parent who expends most time on childcare.

The dataset which was used in the DiMaggio study consisted of a variety of information including cultural attitudes and activities of the participants. Further data collected consisted of self-reports of participant involvement in art, music and engagement with literature. The TALENT data-set had its own drawbacks since it relied heavily on self-reported data such as grades achieved in school (DiMaggio, 1982; p. 191). Whilst this can provide a

general overview of educational attainment, there is a need for the researcher to consider this information carefully since participants could possibly over-report their grades or their participation in cultural activities. This could challenge the credibility and validity of the study since there is a heavy reliance on self-reported data.

A further study that is cited regularly in the literature is that of Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997). This study, like that of DiMaggio (1982), sought to derive models for finding the relationship between cultural capital and educational outcomes and was, therefore quantitative in nature.

Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997) argue that previous studies into cultural capital and education assume that cultural capital is constant and that educational outcomes are always measured at only one time-point. An individual's learning and education is dynamic and varies over time, as with cultural capital. The very nature of capital is that it is accumulated and used at a later point in time, much like cultural capital since it is accrued over time for use at a later stage in an individual's bid to become part of society. Therefore, it could be said that educational attainment and its associated cultural capital is not static and may vary over the period of the individual's 'educational career' [sic] due to the social environment in which the individual finds itself.

Staying true to their position that cultural capital and educational attainment were not static, Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997) chose to use an existing dataset created by the US Bureau for the National Endowment of the Arts that had data collected at three points throughout the participants' education: 1982, 1985 and 1992. This study was significant in terms of sample size (n=12,984) consisting of adults aged 18 and older. In contrast to DiMaggio (1982), Aschaffenburg and Maas considered a wider demographic that included participants from a range of ethnic backgrounds (predominantly afro-Caribbean and Hispanic). In doing this, Aschaffenburg

and Maas gathered data from a demographic that could be seen as more representative than that of DiMaggio (1982).

An interesting point to note about Aschaffenburg and Maas' study (1997) is their operationalisation of cultural capital. The salient position of researchers in the field of Cultural Capital Theory is to operationalise cultural capital in terms of participation in 'high-brow' cultural activities. In this study, however, Aschaffenburg and Maas' measure of cultural capital is very different from others; rather than focusing on measures such as the frequency of attending music recitals or visits to art galleries and museums, the researchers concentrate more on knowledge and training in these particular art forms through attendance and engagement with cultural classes outside of school, such as painting workshops or dance classes. According to Aschaffenburg and Maas, actual participation in cultural classes are 'a strong measure of cultural capital in that they signal a conscious investment in high cultural forms' (p. 577). However, it could be argued that it is predominantly individuals from higher social strata who would have the financial means to engage with these cultural classes (Iannelli, 2013).

It is claimed by Bourdieu (1977) that parents with a high level of education would automatically have a high level of cultural capital which could then be transmitted to their children. This would put children from higher socio-economic status families at an advantage within the education system as they are seen to be already equipped with the necessary beliefs and attitudes in order to fulfil their academic and intellectual development. These values and beliefs are what Bourdieu terms 'habitus' (1977). Children from families with a higher socioeconomic status are already exposed to knowledge and understanding of social and cultural norms and this is inculcated through the language, mannerisms, activities and dispositions of their parents (Jæger, 2011). It is either through passive exposure to their parents' cultural capital or via active direct engagement and deliberate transfer by parents of cultural capital that children inherit these values,

attitudes and beliefs which all contribute to their habitus. This could be extended to their values on foreign language learning and their views of the countries where the languages are spoken.

It could be suggested, therefore, that cultural reproduction has always favoured families with higher socio-economic status and as such, is rewarded through the education system by the attribution of academic qualifications and occupational achievements. This points to a deep inequality that exists within the education system of today; teachers and schools assume a certain level of cultural capital as school curricula have been structured in a way that benefits students from a higher socio-economic background (Iannelli, 2013). Since children from higher socio-economic status families are already familiar with knowledge and beliefs that are related to school, this could be seen as putting them at an advantage over their peers from lower socio-economic status families who may not possess the knowledge, values and beliefs which come with cultural capital.

Gaddis (2013) offers a different take on the inequality that exists within Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory. Gaddis suggests that there is a barrier to upward mobility which comes from a lack of familiarity with the dominant culture and a lack of disposition which comes with such a familiarity (i.e. habitus). Gaddis further suggests turning the situation on its head by exposing disadvantaged students to cultural capital in order for them to better interpret the workings of the education system in which they find themselves. It is through this exposure that disadvantaged students could realise that their peers from higher socio-economic status families may just be better prepared and equipped (culturally and socially) for school and education but may not necessarily be academically gifted. It may spur disadvantaged students on to help them see that they too could cultivate valuable educational and cultural capital regardless of their socioeconomic background. Local authority initiatives such as 'Aim Higher' were created in order to provide young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with the

opportunity to engage with further and higher education and went some way in narrowing the socio-economic divide in education.

Whilst this view adopted by Gaddis (2013) provides hope for students that fall into the disadvantaged category, the existing research literature points to a negative outcome given the starting points of these children. Dumais (2002) states that the educational system prefers students with the ability to navigate the social and cultural norms inculcated within it and that it is not the education system that will provide these abilities (cultural capital). It is the passing down of cultural capital that will provide access to academic rewards and future occupational achievements, all of which are largely dependent on a family's social class. It could be argued, therefore, that this view inevitably places all children from a low social class at a disadvantage with no possibility of achieving highly within the educational system and beyond. Given the lack of definition of cultural capital offered by Bourdieu and other researchers, there continues to be a debate around how cultural capital is operationalised and whether its benefits are actually dictated by a person's socio-economic status.

## 2.6 Conclusions and chapter summary

The aim of this literature review was to critically appraise the existing research literature on three key areas which this thesis will consider: motivation in foreign language education, parental involvement and cultural capital studies.

In summary, one could argue that there is a clear inter-relationship between the three themes discussed in this literature review. A child's cultural capital is considered to be inherited from their parents' education and engagement with cultural activities and transmitted to them through the sharing of experiences and demonstrating acceptable cultural norms. This could be seen as parents becoming actively or passively involved in their child's

education since the transmission of cultural capital, as seen in the literature, plays a crucial role in equipping children with the cultural resources required to negotiate and engage with the educational system. By inculcating a thirst for knowledge through creating a home environment that is conducive to learning, this in turn translates into children becoming motivated learners with an ambition to achieve good grades and their ultimate occupational goal.

Reviewing the existing literature on these themes has raised some important questions and possible implications for this research study. Firstly, scholars in the field of motivation studies have called for more research using a mixed-method approach; combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to gather data that gives a more rounded view of the phenomenon being investigated. Whilst there are some mixed-method studies in this field, none have considered the views and experiences of parents from their perspective. This means that this proposed research could possibly make a unique contribution to knowledge in this field.

In light of the discussions raised in the literature with a call for greater use of a mixed-method approach to researching second and foreign language acquisition, the next chapter will consider the different methodological approaches to conducting research in this field along with their associated philosophical positions. The positive and negative aspects of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be discussed, as well as how incorporating both will provide a clearer understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. I will present an argument for the adoption of a critical realist view of the research which recognises the merits of both quantitative and qualitative data. I will then go on to consider possible methods which can be used to gather both types of data in order to address the research questions for this study.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the idea of positionality and reflexivity in terms of methodological choices. I will examine the aspects of my identity as a teacher of modern foreign languages and as a doctoral researcher and I will discuss the need to be aware of how these identities bring different views, beliefs and values to the research process.

I will go on to outline the methodology that I have chosen for this research study along with the associated methods that were employed. A discussion of the proposed data analysis will highlight how the study aligns with a mixed-methods approach and incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the following research questions:

1. How can the orientations of Year 8 students (in selected regional urban secondary schools) towards learning a modern foreign language be described?
2. How can these children's parents' orientations be described?
3. What is the nature of any relationship between parent and child orientations?

The term 'orientations' was used in order to capture the idea of 'disposition' and is different to the narrower idea of 'attitudes' as discussed in Chapter 2. This also fitted with the notion of cultural capital and habitus in the sense that an individual's habitus dictates their dispositions or 'orientations' towards something.

## 3.2 Positionality and theoretical framework

Ontologically, I have always believed that human behaviour is too complex to be measured objectively and that meaning is generated by individuals and groups interacting socially. This position has not changed as I still believe that it is difficult to generalise human behaviour within given parameters since people behave differently dependent on their own real-world experiences. An important consideration of this position is the impact of other possible factors which could modify an individual's behaviour.
As I read more deeply into methodology and positioning, it dawned on me that my epistemological position may be in the process of shifting as I engaged more and more with studies that employed quantitative methods alongside qualitative ones. Throughout my master's degree, I believed that an interpretivist view of research was really the only way to conduct research in education given the transient nature of human behaviour. I was adamant that numbers were not able to illustrate anything meaningful and that positivist research reduced meaning to nothingness. I believed that there was an incommensurability between positivism and constructivism/interpretivism.

The engagement with methodological and philosophical articles was a thought-provoking exercise in terms of challenging my own ontological and epistemological assumptions. It encouraged me to explore other possible ways of approaching my research idea. Cupchik (2001) had a transformative effect on my theoretical assumptions to a greater extent by enhancing my understanding of how to amalgamate two irreconcilable views of the real world (constructivism and positivism) and apply them to educational research. I realised that for research to be effective and have an impact, it is necessary to be aware of the merits of both quantitative and qualitative methods and the underpinning philosophies. In fact, it became apparent that it is necessary to use whichever method is fit for purpose and that there is no real incommensurability between the paradigms (Cupchik, 2001).

Cupchik (2001) argues for a coming-together of the constructivist and positivist views of research under the term 'constructivist realism'. He acknowledges that both views are restrictive in nature in that positivism strips richness and texture from data and reduces it to numbers, whereas constructivism's use of 'priestly and impenetrable' language can create meaning but only to those who are versed in constructivist schools of thought. What I found striking from this paper was the idea that, whilst physical scientists are said to be objective in their research, the very act of choosing variables is subject to interpretation and distortion and that data is always shaped by the researcher. Olson (1995) also believes that total objectivity is not possible for researchers who are human beings with embedded thoughts and values.

After reading this article, links to the current study appeared in the ideas from Cupchik (2001) and Olson (1995). It then became clear how important *both* quantitative and qualitative data are when conducting research. In isolation, whilst greater precision is gained from simplifying phenomena in a quantitative approach, many of the other complex aspects are overlooked. A qualitative approach can provide rich descriptive data; however, it may be difficult to generalise the findings. So, in isolation, each approach is restrictive in what data it can produce.

Further reading on research methodologies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods led to an understanding of 'critical realism', a theoretical position which was pioneered by Roy Bhaskar in the early 1990s. The key ontological tenet of critical realism states that reality exists independently of our knowledge or perceptions. Epistemologically, knowledge generation about this reality is considered socially produced and subject to external factors which are context-dependent (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; Zachariadis, Scott & Barrett, 2013).

Within critical realist research, quantitative and qualitative methods play pivotal roles and are used together, since critical realism does not commit to one side of the paradigm dichotomy. The choice of methods used is dependent on the capability of those methods in collecting data which conveys different kinds of knowledge about the social mechanisms being explored (Scott, 2005; Zachariadis et al., 2013). Quantitative methods are key in providing description as these alone cannot expose more complex evidence on what generates the actual social events that we observe. Qualitative methods prove more insightful in providing rich descriptions of the phenomena being observed and by identifying structures and interactions within complex situations (Zachariadis et al., 2013).

This interplay between quantitative and qualitative research applies to the current study as the quantitative data provides important description and possible areas for further exploration. However, in order to add an extra level of richness and texture to the research, the thick descriptive data from a qualitative study would bring greater levels of clarity. Researchers should be able to choose and defend a methodology as appropriate to the phenomenon being investigated without the need to pledge loyalty to either side of the quantitative versus qualitative debate. This position is supported by Guba and Lincoln (1994) who argue that both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately regardless of the chosen research paradigm.

Le Gallais (2008) was particularly influential in making me realise the extent to which I was wedded to my original theoretical position and that I had not considered other schools of thought, nor the implications that the 'restricted vision' or 'overrapport' (p. 147) with the ideas could affect the outcomes. This was a turning point in my development as a researcher as it prompted me to consider other possible avenues of inquiry and the implications of my own thoughts and viewpoints on the research outcomes.

## 3.3 Chosen research framework

Research conducted in the field of motivation and second language acquisition (SLA) was first approached from a social psychological perspective (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) which adopted a quantitative methodology. This approach dominated the field for over forty years until research began to use different theories and methods to investigate human behaviour as researchers realised that the quantitative methodology adopted by the social psychological perspective was no longer fit for purpose.

The methodology used by social psychologists such as Gardner and Lambert (1972) included test batteries and standardised assessment techniques. Issues arose when further research was conducted within the field that revealed that motivation was a dynamic construct (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2002; Burns & Knox, 2011; Henry, 2014; Ushioda, 2014;); a concept which standardised tests and test batteries failed to recognise. Researchers did not take into consideration the temporal, historical and socio-cultural dimensions that can all affect motivation (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2002; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ushioda, 2014; Gayton, 2016).

Consequently, SLA researchers investigating motivation began to develop research methodologies that deviated from what had been the most influential positivist approach since the 1970s. Studies began to include qualitative methods which took into consideration participants' emotions, thoughts and feelings and these were gathered through engaging in dialogue and deep descriptions. A distinct epistemological shift from positivism to interpretivism took place with more and more studies adopting qualitative methods (Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Wright, 1999; Williams et al., 2002; Bartram, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Tam, 2009; Gayton, 2016). This epistemological shift came about when researchers contemplated the possibility of multiple realities; an ontology which aligns with a subjective world view. Motivation is complex and made up of a number of variables, all

of which will differ amongst individuals. An individual's behaviour is unique to them and is constructed through life experiences and interactions, a notion consistent with a constructivist (subjective) ontology.

The same issues with variables arise when considering parental involvement in a child's education. There are numerous variables which could affect the extent to which parents become involved in their child's learning and education and these differ from person to person. These variables could include work commitments, socio-economic backgrounds, their level of education and the availability of opportunities to become involved at school (Bubić & Tošić, 2016; Costa & Faria, 2017). Considering the complexities of these variables when researching parental involvement, adopting a purely objective ontology becomes difficult since each individual's experiences and backgrounds are different and are unlikely to be perfectly replicated elsewhere. By adopting an approach that can explore a phenomenon from multiple perspectives would allow the researcher to observe the phenomenon through different lenses.

The present study adopts a critical realist approach which affords the opportunity to incorporate quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and recognises the merits of both. It is also an approach that acknowledges the multiple contexts that could influence one's perceptions of reality.

## 3.4 Research design

Before embarking on a research study, it is paramount to consider carefully the methodology to be used in order to gather meaningful data. As this study is adopting a critical realist approach, its aim is not to seek causality or to generalise, although the latter could still be possible to some extent. A critical realist approach, as previously mentioned, has a commitment to

incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, recognising the merits and roles of both types of data.

Qualitative research gives researchers the opportunity to investigate human behaviour in great detail and the motives for such behaviour. The tools used to gather qualitative data allow for deeper descriptions of phenomena which statistical data is unable to handle. The narratives which can be created from this data build a picture of the phenomenon being investigated which numbers alone cannot do (Cupchik, 2001).

The philosophy which underpins this study points to the importance of qualitative data in providing rich descriptions; however, it is difficult to deny the power of numbers. Lazaraton (2000) presents evidence in her meta-analysis of methodologies used in applied linguistics which suggests that during the late 1990s, there was an abundance of quantitative studies with 88% of the 332 studies analysed being quantitative in nature, as opposed to only 10% being qualitative. This evidence is substantiated by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) who call for more research to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods which will give a more rounded view of the phenomenon being investigated as depicted in Figure 4 by Gorard and Taylor (2004).

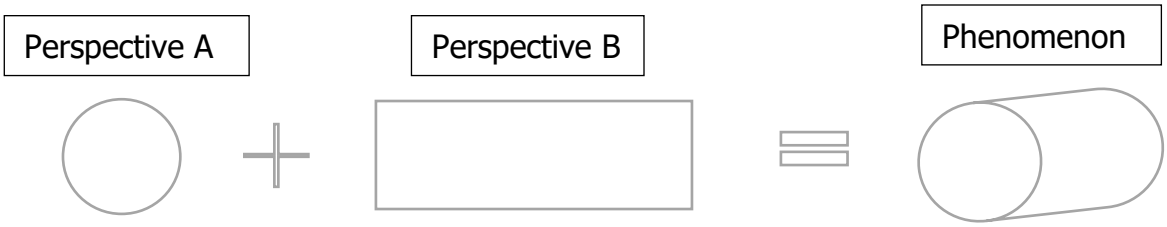



*Figure 4 Combining perspectives (Gorard & Taylor, 2004, p. 44)*

The idea of uniting quantitative and qualitative methods stems from researchers breaking away from 'mono-method research' (Gorard & Taylor, 2004) and recognising the power of bringing together numerical and textual

data to elevate the phenomenon being investigated to greater levels of clarity. The National Research Council (2002) states that claims made by incorporating a variety of methods are stronger than those using a mono-methodological approach.

In response to Dörnyei and Ushioda's call for more mixed-methods research in applied linguistics, this research study combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to observe parental orientations towards foreign language learning through a wider lens. The present study is framed within a purposive survey approach which calls on participants to report their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs. This approach lends itself to the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analyses which resonate with a mixed-methods research design (Bryman, 2012). Surveys enable the researcher to gather a lot of information in a short space of time from a large number of people. If a large enough sample is achieved, then there is also the possibility of generalisability which Bryman (2012) defines as 'concerning the *external validity* of research findings' (p.712).

Bartram (2006c) offers an appraisal of a survey approach which he states has inherent links with positivistic views of the research process. This is countered, however, by his suggestion that data collected 'from the horse's mouth' [sic] and a shift in focus from theory to data first resonate with qualitative research. The critical realist position adopted by the present study allows for the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative research methods and recognises the value that each layer of analysis can add.

### 3.4.1 Choice of schools

The choice of schools for this study was dictated by the need for a satisfactory representation of the diverse demographic within urban schools. I have taught in Birmingham for several years and I have an acute awareness of the city's demographic. I also have contacts with headteachers

in secondary schools within the wider West Midlands and Shropshire conurbations. These contacts proved invaluable when approaching schools to participate in this study.

Four schools were chosen in the aim of capturing a reasonably representative sample of local schools in spite of the challenge of achieving this in scientific terms. It was hoped that four schools would provide me with this, and with a dataset that would still be manageable within the scope of this practitioner study. The schools were located in different parts of the county as indicated on the map in Figure 5.

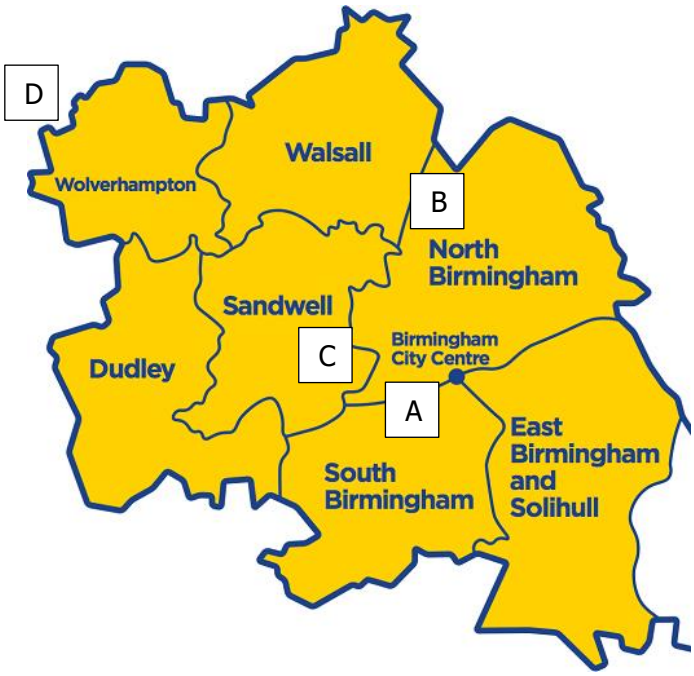



*Figure 5 Map of Sandwell and Birmingham*

*School A: Birmingham city centre*

School A is a small, independent co-educational day school in the city centre of Birmingham. The school is located within an affluent area of the city and the school buildings are original Georgian within extensive landscapes.

The students who attend this school are aged between 3 and 18 years old. It prides itself in uniting mixed abilities and cultural diversity whilst providing a supportive environment in which students can learn. Given the nature and ethos of the school, parents send their children to School A as the class sizes are small and there is open communication between parents, pupils and the staff. There is a large proportion of the student body who possess an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which replaced the 'statement'; an assessment which was made of a child's special educational needs and provided one-to-one support in lessons if required. Students with these EHCPs are able to access funding to support interventions which are put into place throughout the child's academic development at school and beyond. It is also possible for parents to apply for funding to cover the cost of the termly fees for tuition and other activities.

*School B: Birmingham local area*

School B is located to the north-east of Birmingham and has academy status. It is a large school catering for over 1,000 students from the ages of 11 to 18.

There is a wide range of cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds which are catered for in this school and it is at the forefront of inclusive education. Like School A this school caters for a significant number of students who have an EHCP and as such, has a dedicated 'Resource Base' for students with cognitive and learning difficulties. More than half (53.9%) of the student population has a first language that is not English and 40.2% of students qualify for free school meals.

A large proportion (62%) of the school population are entered for the English Baccalaureate which is a combination of subjects which includes modern foreign languages.

*School C: Sandwell local area*

School C is an average size secondary school catering for around 900 students in the Sandwell area of the West Midlands. In 2009, the school was granted academy status and has won a number of accolades for teaching and learning such as 'Beacon School for Holocaust Education'.

Compared to school B, school C has a lower proportion of students for whom English is not their first language (27.2%) and students eligible for free school meals (37.7%). There is a higher than average number of students who have special educational needs (16.6%, national average – 10.8%) and only 1.2% of students hold an EHCP for special educational needs or disabilities.

*School D: Telford, Shropshire*

School D is a larger than average secondary school to the north of Telford city centre. It is a comprehensive school which caters for around 1,200 students aged between 11 and 16 years old. The school has undergone a number of improvements since 2016 under the direction of their new headteacher. The school was placed in 'Special Measures' by Ofsted in 2015 and has recently reopened as a new academy.

There is a below average number of students with an EHCP (0.5%, national average – 1.7%) and 15.1% of the student population have special educational needs. There is also a below average number of students for whom English is not their first language (12.5%, national average – 16.9%). A significantly large proportion (74%) of students take the English Baccalaureate combination of subjects which is significantly higher than the average of 40% for English schools.

I was fully aware of my relationship with the contacts in these schools, however I have never taught in schools B, C and D. To the students in these schools, I was considered both an 'Insider' and an 'Outsider', terms used by researchers of reflexivity and positionality (Le Gallais, 2008; Hamdan & Paré, 2009; Gair, 2012). The insider/outsider positioning can impact significantly on the research process and it is necessary to acknowledge this. The students considered me as an 'insider' to the extent that they knew I was a teacher and a middle leader. On the other hand, I was also considered an 'outsider' as I did not teach them, nor was I known to them prior to my involvement with their school.

Being an 'outsider' to the school was used to my advantage as I had a very distant relationship with the students. They knew that, once my data collection was complete, I would have no further involvement with them. This encouraged the students to be more open with me about their thoughts and attitudes towards learning a foreign language. This openness was encouraged from the outset and provided me with more truthful data for analysis. The same principle applied to the parents since I have no relationship with the parents of schools B, C, and D.

My 'insider' identity was also invaluable in setting up meetings with the participant schools since I know the headteachers of schools C and D from working with them in previous employment. I was able to make direct contact with both headteachers who were very keen for their schools to be involved with a research project and both mentioned issues with languages uptake and lack of parental backing for the subject.

*Schools catchment information*

Table 1 shows data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) which indicates the level of deprivation within the participant schools' immediate

catchment areas. Each measure is out of 32844 with 1 being the most deprived area to 32844 being the least deprived area.

| School | Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) | IMD Decile | Income Deprivation | Employment Deprivation | Education, Skills and Training |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School A | 14220 | 5 | 16956 | 16615 | 25421 |
| School B | 12297 | 4 | 11488 | 12950 | 17705 |
| School C | 3881 | 2 | 2690 | 4478 | 3389 |
| School D | 7715 | 3 | 7766 | 7421 | 7995 |

*Table 1 Schools' immediate catchment areas – Deprivation Data (2015)*

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is the combined measure for all areas of deprivation measurement. For the purpose of this study, four key indicators were chosen: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education, Skills and Training; and the overall measure of Multiple Deprivation. It is clear from the IMD data for each catchment that School A is situated in an area which has a high deprivation index score with high levels of education and employment, compared to School C which has a catchment area with low levels of income, employment and education.

### 3.4.2 Parent and pupil demographics

Demographic data on each school can be found in Tables 2 and 3. The participant schools are diverse and are attended by students from all linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds.

| School | Gender | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | |
| A | 23 | 6 | 29 |
| B | 124 | 67 | 191 |
| C | 99 | 110 | 209 |
| D | 120 | 118 | 238 |

*Table 2 Gender breakdown for participant schools*

| School | White British | Black African | Black Caribbean | Indian | Pakistani | Other Asian | Other Black | Mixed | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 4 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 |
| B | 6 | 11 | 32 | 56 | 33 | 9 | 3 | 14 | 27 |
| C | 101 | 7 | 10 | 25 | 25 | 6 | 3 | 15 | 17 |
| D | 177 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 17 | 14 |

*Table 3 Ethnic backgrounds of families in participant schools.*

It is interesting to note that Schools C and D have a higher number of 'White British' children who attend their schools compared to Schools A and B. Schools B and C have a similar number of 'Pakistani' and 'Mixed Background' students. From these statistics, it can be concluded that Schools A and B are more ethnically diverse than Schools C and D. A reason for this is that both Schools A and B are in close proximity to Birmingham city centre which is known for its cultural and ethnic diversity.

Looking at the gender and ethnic make-up of each school, every effort was made to ensure that true and equal representation of the population was taken as the sample. Schools A and B have largely Indian or Pakistani Year 8 students whereas Schools C and D have largely White British students. For gender, Schools B and C had opposing numbers of male and female students; School B had fewer females than males and School C had vice versa. The choice of schools, therefore, was made on the basis of providing an equal and representative sample for the study.

### 3.4.3 Negotiating access

First and foremost, as a practising teacher in a secondary school, I have a full enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check which is required of everyone who works with young and/or vulnerable people. This protects these individuals from any harm that may arise from anyone who has not been through the rigorous vetting process and has an existing record of inappropriate behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults. In order to

gain access to the participant schools, this would have been an essential requirement.

Given the strict policies in schools surrounding safeguarding and child protection, it was important to establish positive working relationships with the participating schools. Having identified key staff with management responsibilities for teaching and learning, contact was made via email, outlining the aims of my proposed study and the nature of their involvement. To maintain a transparent approach, the participant information sheet and the research proposal were shared with the school contacts to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their participation. Confirmation of their involvement was received, and all participant schools were looking forward to being part of a research project and one school in particular was keen to forge links with university researchers in order to gain a deeper understanding of academic research being conducted in the wider educational context.

Initial school visits and meetings were agreed at the end of the summer term 2018 in order for me to get a clearer picture of each school context and to establish well-defined lines of communication as the project progressed. It was also important for me to get an understanding of each school's expectations of me as a researcher.

### 3.5 Research instruments

In order to gather meaningful data that would answer my research questions, it was important to consider the merits of research tools and the nature of the data that would be gathered.

To answer these research questions, two instruments were developed: a questionnaire for parents and children and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire provides quantitative data to be analysed statistically which is followed up with semi-structured interviews, gathering deeper and richer

descriptions of participants' orientations and experiences of foreign language learning. This approach remains aligned to the notion that numbers alone are unable to build a full picture of a phenomenon being investigated (Cupchik, 2001) and that a mono-methodological approach is weaker than one which employs a variety of methods (National Research Council, 2002).

It is important to acknowledge at this point that, whilst a comparison of children reflecting on current MFL learning experiences with parents reflecting on their past experiences may appear unfair and open to question by some, parents' reflections may become faded or exaggereated by the passage of time; however, the current study does not aim to capture the accuracy of parents' impressions. This study's interests lie in gauging and describing the orientations that parents have formed and currently possess, and which may influence their children.

Using a sequential mixed-method approach affords greater opportunities for triangulation of data which is seen as a way of enhancing the convergent validity and trustworthiness of the data (Gorard & Taylor, 2004). This can be done by corroborating two or more sets of data which bring the phenomenon being investigated to greater levels of clarity and reduces any possible bias. The role of triangulation is not to check the robustness of the methods being used; triangulation should involve methods that are complementary in nature and observe the same phenomenon from a different perspective, then put together to create an overall picture. If the different perspectives do corroborate, this has a positive impact on the credibility of the research.

### 3.5.1 Questionnaires

Research studies in motivation and attitudes to language learning favour the use of questionnaires to gather data (Williams et al., 2002; Bell, 2005; Coleman et al., 2007; Brown, 2009; Waninge et al., 2014; Lanvers, Hultgren & Gayton, 2016).

The questionnaires used in this study (Appendix 4) were developed from an existing questionnaire used in a PhD study (Chan, 2008) which investigated motivation levels in Sixth Form students learning English as a Foreign Language in Hong Kong. The statements were modified from the 'Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery', developed by Gardner (1985) and the questionnaire had been previously validated through testing and retesting. The reformulation of the statements for the purpose of my study went through a number of stages in light of feedback gathered from discussion with language teaching professionals and academics within the field of foreign language education and teaching, a 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998).

The evolution of the community of practice started with a simple post using social media where I asked members of a closed group to comment on my statements. I stated that any posts made would be anonymous and would be taken as permission for them to be used in the data collection exercise. As the comments were posted, it became clear that these members were as passionate about my research as I was. Being a linguist and a researcher, it was highlighted to me that my questionnaire statements were unintentionally biased which brought into question my positionality. There was a clear conflict of identity with my 'linguist self' influencing the language that I used. From doing this, I am now more aware of how my position as a teacher and a linguist can influence my research and that this process has challenged me to become 'reflexively vigilant' (Le Gallais, 2008). My passion for languages and language teaching was clear throughout the statements as all of them were positively worded with no traces of negativity.

This had clear implications for the construction of the questionnaire as the data collected would be biased and there would be an imbalance of positively and negatively worded statements. Having a balance of positive and negatively worded statements could reduce the possibility of acquiescent response bias which occurs when participants consistently mark

the same Likert scale value for each statement (Bryman, 2012). When constructing the statements, this was clearly not considered and the implications for my research would have been profound in terms of validity and reliability and if it were not for engaging with the language professionals, I would not have been aware of this until it was too late.

According to Goodyear et al. (2014), social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, facilitates working with multiple groups and overcomes time and financial implications. This was certainly the case in terms of using social media as the conduit for creating a community of practice as Facebook is now seen as a global phenomenon and is also 'positioned as an educative tool' (Goodyear et al., 2014; p. 928). Using the closed group on Facebook for the purpose of developing and refining my questionnaire allowed me to post my research idea and the statements quickly and this was disseminated to thousands of individuals who could potentially comment on my work. One participant posted, 'It is very interesting and I would strongly recommend you to go ahead with it. There is great need for research of this kind.'

After consulting the literature on research methods and studies in motivation and language education, it became clear that the number of statements to be used is influential in ensuring that the questionnaire fits the purpose of gathering valid data to address the research questions. The studies which were consulted employed questionnaires of varying lengths with one study in particular using a questionnaire with 80 statements (Bell, 2005). Whilst 80 statements may appear a substantial number, Bryman (2012) argues that questionnaires which contain questions on topics that are of interest to participants may be well-received and that it is challenging to define the optimal length of a questionnaire before it becomes 'too long'.

Research into motivation and attitudes in foreign language learning makes use of questionnaires that vary, on average, between 14 to 44 statements. This informed my choice to make the length of my questionnaires within this

range. Following the online discussions with teaching professionals and language academics, the decision was taken to include 36 statements requiring Likert scale responses.

The questionnaires for both parents and children contained the same number of statements and these were grouped into sections which measured different aspects of motivation towards modern foreign language learning. Grouping the statements according to the variables that they were measuring facilitated the analysis of the data and made immediately visible any meaningful information.

*Statements 1-10*

These statements were to measure the strength of one's general motivation. As the parental questionnaire required participants to reminisce about their time at school, these statements were worded in the past tense to indicate this requirement.

*Statements 11-15*

The purpose of these statements was to examine the relationship between the participants' achievement and their enthusiasm to learn a foreign language. Again, these statements were worded in the past tense as for the parental questionnaire.

*Statements 16-20*

These statements examined the extent to which the participants ascribed the outcomes of their MFL learning to internal or external factors (e.g. teaching pedagogy, self-actualisation, ability).

*Statements 21-28*

The aim of these statements was to measure the participants' investment in effort for the sake of learning a modern foreign language. This is known as 'Intrinsic Motivation'.

*Statements 29-36*

The remaining statements were to measure the participants' Extrinsic Motivation; the investment of effort to gain reward and incentives.

The purpose of administering two questionnaires, one to parents and one to students, was to seek any possible relationship between the two variables. The data collection and analysis of the questionnaires are discussed more fully in a later section. It is necessary to recognise that, whilst questionnaires are the preferred method for gathering data in motivation and attitude studies, they are not without limitations (Robson, 2011; Arthur et al., 2012; Bryman, 2012).

Self-administered questionnaires are considered easier and quicker to administer since the researcher is not required to be present when they are completed. The absence of the researcher can also have desirable outcomes since the participants do not feel influenced to respond how they think the researcher wishes them to respond. This arguably leads to more honest and reflective responses. Questionnaires are able to be distributed to large numbers of participants through the post at the same time which is cheaper than travelling to conduct individual interviews with participants who could be widely dispersed. Finally, self-administered questionnaires are more convenient for participants to complete since they are not given constraints within which to complete the questionnaire, unlike a face-to-face situation. The absence of a time constraint allows for a more relaxed approach to

completing the questionnaire which, in turn, is likely to lead to honest responses.

Conversely, self-administered questionnaires do have limitations. The number of questions or statements has a substantial influence over the completion of a questionnaire. The researcher wishes to find out as much information as possible but due to the risk of 'respondent fatigue' (Bryman, 2012, p. 235), long questionnaires are rendered impracticable. Coupled with this are those respondents whose competency and fluency in English are limited. This could be due to the respondent being a non-native speaker of English or someone who is English with poor literacy levels. The latter could pose a significant issue, particularly when distributing self-administered questionnaires. As these questionnaires are completed in the respondents' homes, it is not possible to provide prompts for those who require extra support when completing the questionnaire. It is therefore paramount that the questions or statements that are used are clearly written using unambiguous language.

One key issue that affects all questionnaires that are self-administered is that of response rates, particularly if the questionnaire is distributed by post. If the response rate is low, this could have a knock-on effect on the representativeness of the sample that has been achieved from those who responded. For a response rate to be considered acceptable and therefore sufficient for the purpose of data analysis, a return of between 60-69% is necessary (Mangione, 1995). Anything over 70% is classed as very good, or excellent when the response rate is 85% or higher.

In order to improve the response rates of self-administered questionnaires, a number of steps should be considered. Firstly, it is important to make the objective of the questionnaire clear so that respondents are aware as to why they are completing it. The inclusion of a participant information sheet which

outlines the reasons for the research and why the respondent has been selected will address this first point.

The questionnaires that were created for this study were modified to fit the purpose for each audience: parents and children. Great care was taken to ensure that the language used in both questionnaires did not contain any jargon or terminology that the respondents would find difficult to decipher. Care was also taken to ensure that the questionnaires were inclusive in nature. An appropriate format was employed (student-friendly font, font size and an image depicting 'hello' in several languages) for the student questionnaires in order to make them appealing to students, and the layout of the statements was made to cover only one and a half sides of A4 size paper. The absence of open-ended questions also made the questionnaire appear shorter and therefore less onerous for the students to complete.

Questionnaires and survey research have contributed widely to the field of language learning and motivational psychology as respondents are able to express their opinions and attitudes concerning specific aspects of foreign language learning as well as giving the researcher the opportunity to gauge respondents' knowledge and awareness of the skills and capacities required to learn a foreign language.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews continue to be ubiquitous in qualitative research and the chosen method among those researching the subjective nature of human thought and behaviour (Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012). According to Gorard and Taylor (2004), 74% of research submitted to the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) combined survey research with interviews.

Interviews can take many forms including structured, semi-structured, group/focus group or online using programs such as Skype or Facetime. It is

important to consider the type of interview in order to ensure that meaningful data is collected to address the research questions. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were chosen. Semi-structured interviews provide the interviewee with the opportunity to elaborate on points and open up the discussion without the rigidity of a structured interview format. An interview guide ensures that the discussion remains focused and if necessary, brought back into focus should the discussion stray off-topic. The data collected from these interviews can provide a valuable insight into the thoughts and experiences of the interviewee as they are given the opportunity to respond to the questions as they wish.

It is important to note that, whilst interviews are the most common method for gathering verbal qualitative data, there are a number of variables that need to be considered to ensure that the quality and validity of the data is upheld. Interviews for the present study were conducted using high quality recording equipment in order to guarantee a good, clear recording from which to transcribe. This was to avoid any possible inaccuracies in transcription which could arise if transcribing from poor quality recordings. The interview location was also important in order to ensure that it was private and not subject to extraneous noise which could also affect the quality of the recording. Whilst these aforementioned variables are not easy to control, reasonable measures can be put into place to ensure the best possible standard of recording and interview environment is reached.

Besides the mechanical and environmental variables, it is also important to consider the qualities of a successful interviewer. Kvale (1996, in Bryman, 2012, p. 475) offers a list of criteria of a successful interviewer. These include amongst others 'gentle', 'sensitive' and 'critical'. These three criteria stand out in particular as they strike me as the three most important:

1. 'Gentle' – the interviewer should be patient with the interviewee and allow them time to think and reflect on their responses.
2. 'Sensitive' – it is important to consider the backgrounds of interviewees and to be conscious of previous experiences which may cause distress if broached in the discussion.
3. 'Critical' – responses from the interviewee can be challenged in order to provoke further discussion and debate.

The purpose of the interviews for this study is to capture what Cupchik (1993, 2018) terms 'critical episodes'. Critical episodes can be defined as a part of human life that involves one or more individuals that accounts for prior experiences and behaviour which serve as the foundation for further episodes throughout someone's life (Cupchik, 1993). He goes on to suggest a number of ways in which to capture critical episodes; one of which is by interviews which provides the participant with opportunities to elaborate on and discuss their thoughts and ideas.

Gorard and Taylor (2004) conducted a survey to gather information on the preferred methods chosen by researchers who adopt a qualitative methodology. The study had 520 respondents, 93% of whom claimed to have conducted interviews at some stage in their research careers. The study goes on to investigate the combinations in which qualitative methods are used with quantitative or other research methods, and interviews were coupled with observation by 79 respondents.

Compelling arguments are made by Gorard and Taylor (2004) when looking at the number of research studies that were submitted to the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Back in 2001, 1,305 research studies were submitted to the 2001 RAE that contained data from interviews which accounted for 15% of the overall submissions. This evidence suggests that interviews continue to be a revered method for gathering qualitative information about human behaviour.

One additional noteworthy point is that interviews were rarely combined with statistical analysis of quantitative data. This points to a lack of research and expertise in adopting this combination of methods which further defends my reason for choosing mixed-methods for this research study, combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

## 3.6 Data Collection and analysis

The analysis of data is the most important stage of the research process and forms the basis of the findings that occur. It also involves the management of a large body of information from which conclusions can be drawn. During the process, the large data set is reduced into more manageable forms which makes it easier for the researcher to interpret (Bryman, 2012). How this reduction occurs depends on the type of analysis chosen.

In this section, I will discuss the data collection methods and chosen analyses for each of the research tools used in this study.

### 3.6.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires used in this study were assigned a code which made identifying participants easier and conformed with upholding confidentiality and anonymity. As the questionnaires were being given to both parents and their children, it was necessary to assign a code that allowed me to match the child questionnaire to the parental questionnaire. This was done by assigning a code 'S' for 'student' plus the participant number with the code 'P' for 'parent' and the corresponding participant number. This ensured that student participant 'S001' would receive the parental questionnaire 'P001'. The questionnaires were designed to have statements requiring Likert-type responses on a 5-point scale. Each set of statements aimed to describe a particular motivation construct as outlined in Section 3.3.1 and percentage totals were used to provide an overall description.

For each of the motivation constructs, a mean value was calculated for each set of statements. Alongside the statement responses, participants were asked to provide demographic data which allowed for further interpretation when looking at variables such as gender, level of education or employment status. Once the mean values were calculated for the six key dependent variables for both parents and students, these values were input into the statistical package SPSS in order to further manipulate the data and to look for any possible relationships between the parent and student mean values. This was done using the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) which is an indication of a relationship within a set of bivariate data that is parametric i.e. shows evidence of normal distribution (Sullivan & Artino, 2013; Joshi et al., 2015). Whilst Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation indicates a possible relationship and its strength between the variables, it is *not* a measure of causality.

Variables which have a r-value close or equal to +1 are said to have a 'strong positive relationship'; if the value of $x$ increases, then the value of $y$ also increases. Those with a r-value close or equal to -1 are said to have a 'strong negative relationship'; if the value of $x$ increases, then the value of $y$ decreases.

When the mean values are input into SPSS and Pearson's $r$ has been calculated, it is important to note the extent to which the data can be seen as 'significant'. For quantitative data to be 'statistically significant', a $p$-value of $< 0.05$ is needed which is considered the benchmark standard in quantitative research studies (Bryman, 2012). The $p$-value is a test of significance which establishes the extent to which a researcher can be confident that the finding of a study is present in the whole population and whether s/he is taking a considerable risk in inferring this (Bryman, 2012). When considering statistical significance, the researcher is required to construct a *null hypothesis*. A null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between two variables in the population from which the sample

was taken (Bryman, 2012). In the case of my study, the null hypothesis states that there is no relationship between parental and child motivation to learn a modern foreign language. For this hypothesis to be rejected, a *p*-value of < 0.05 is required, that is 5 chances in 100 that I may wrongly conclude that there is a relationship between the two variables. If the value is indeed less than 0.05, I can reject the null hypothesis as there is evidence to suggest that there *is* a relationship between parent and child data.

#### *3.6.1.1 Pilot Study*

The pilot study consisted of two-stages: the co-construction of the questionnaire statements with an online community of practice as outlined in Section 3.5.1 and testing the instrument in a participant school. The co-constructed questionnaires created for this study, although drawing upon a validated form from a previous study, were tested on a small sample of students and parents in my current employment. After sharing a copy of the proposed questionnaire with participant schools, School C suggested changing the Likert responses from 1-5 to 5-1 with 5 being 'strongly disagree' and 1 being 'strongly agree' since their students were responding to this type of format. This change was made, and the questionnaires were administered to Year 8 students (n=29) at School A. When the questionnaires were collected back in, it became clear immediately that confusion arose with the Likert responses as students had mistaken the scale to be the opposite.

The general feedback from the students, the issue with Likert responses aside, indicated that the questionnaire was not too onerous to complete and that it was clearly presented and easy to follow. The questionnaire was completed during a timetabled lesson, therefore there was a 100% return (n=29). The parental questionnaire was also well-received, and I received positive feedback regarding the format and the length, resulting in a return of 51% (n=15).

Taking the feedback into consideration from the pilot testing, the questionnaires were reformulated to ensure that the Likert responses returned to the format of 1-5. This ensured consistency across all participant schools and lowered the risk of invalidating the data due to misinterpretation of the Likert scale responses.

To address any issues with validity and reliability of the data instrument, statistical tests were run on the pilot data collected to investigate the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaires. This was done using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha$) which is widely used as a test of consistency and reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; Bryman, 2012). A high alpha value indicates a strong internal consistency and reliability of the participant responses. The table below show the Cronbach's alpha values for both parental and student questionnaires.

| Cronbach's Alpha | Student | Parent | No of items |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 0.844 | 0.850 | 36 |

*Table 4 Cronbach's Alpha values for questionnaires*

Both Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.8 which is considered the accepted value that indicates a strong internal consistency and reliability of the data collected (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; Bryman, 2012). The calculation of this value provided the much-needed evidence of the robustness and reliability of my data collection instrument. Given the number of modifications that took place and the fear of invalidating the instrument, it was necessary to ensure that the questionnaires gathered the required data to address the research questions and that the data collected was reliable. In order to explore deeper the questionnaire data, as well as the Pearson correlation, a series of inferential statistical tests were conducted to establish the strength of association and the magnitude of any effects that parent

independent variables had on student dependent variables. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to see if there was any statistically significant difference between groups for a given dependent variable, such as gender differences in the six constructs. Linear regression was used determine the magnitude of any possible effect of parent independent variables on the student dependent variables. The effect size was calculated using eta-squared which provides a measure of association between nominal and continuous variables. Eta squared indicates how much variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The values of eta squared are usually below 1 as it would be unlikely that all of variance in a dependent variable would be affected only by one independent variable (Fritz & Morris, 2012). Fritz and Morris (2012) suggest that an eta squared of 0.02 or 2% would be considered a small effect, 0.13 or 13% would be medium and 0.26 or 26% would be large.

There are several independent variables which could have been explored such as disadvantage, ethnicity and linguistic context at home, however, due to the limited scope of this study, the decision was taken to focus on gender as there continues to be a clear gap between boys' achievement in MFL compared to girls as suggested by the literature (Barton, 1997; Coleman et al., 2007; Bartram, 2010; Martin, 2020). Furthermore, a strong focus on gender is evident within Attribution Theory as previous studies have shown that females attribute their successes/failures at a task differently to males (Folmer et al., 2008; Siann, Lightbody & Walsh, 1996; Williams et al., 2004). It is important to recognise that there are other variables which could impact on an individual's motivation, however, for the purpose of the current study, the choice to focus on gender is due to the salience of this variable in a language learning context, the widespread concerns about the gender achievement gap and the influence of gender on pupils' perceptions of MFL importance (Bartram, 2006; Martin, 2020). Gender also plays significant role in constructing peer group attitudes towards languages as research suggests

that males perceive languages as a feminine subject (Bartram, 2006; Lanvers et al., 2018; Martin, 2020).

The choice of using parametric tests was made as the questionnaire data met the required assumptions, including approximate normal distribution. Eta squared was used as a measure of effect size as it provides a clear illustration of the magnitude of the effect on the dependent variable.

### 3.6.2 Interviews

Before embarking on the interview process, it was first necessary to identify the participants. This was informed by the quantitative stage and the correlation data that was gathered from the questionnaires. In order to gain a deeper understanding of any correlational relationship, parents and students were given the opportunity to leave their details on a space on the questionnaire if they consented to being contact for an interview.

An interview schedule was created (Appendix 6), and all participants (n=12) were invited to be interviewed at the children's respective schools. For parents who were unable to attend the school, the option to be interviewed on Skype was offered. Participants who chose this were told to only use their microphone and that video was not necessary. By doing this, parents and students were comfortable and familiar with the surroundings and felt more at ease going into the interview. All interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing participants the opportunity to elaborate on points where they felt comfortable to, whilst still being guided by an interview guide; a set of questions was used to direct a discussion towards the topics and issues that were the focus of the interview (Bryman, 2012).

The role of the interview schedule was to provide some structure to the discussion but allowing for elaboration where possible in order to add richer, more complex descriptions of the topic. It was important to avoid closed

questions with simple yes/no responses so that the respondent was prompted to add further detail. The interview schedule also needed to build upon the information gathered from the questionnaires, therefore it was necessary for the quantitative analysis to be completed before embarking on the interviews. The interview schedule was pivotal in ensuring that the conduct of the interviews was smooth and consistent across all participants.

The interviews were recorded using recording software on a tablet computer with a high-quality digital microphone. A high quality, clear recording is ideal for transcribing as it allows the researcher to be accurate in their transcriptions. Further to this, the rooms in which the interviews took place lent themselves well to the recording process since the rooms were small, private and away from extraneous noise. All of these factors contribute to a successful recording.

After transcription of the interviews, thematic analysis was chosen as the main analysis tool for the interviews. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is a tool for recognising and reporting patterns (themes) within a dataset. The aim of this tool is to reduce an extremely large dataset into smaller, manageable units for analysis. Whilst it is used widely within qualitative studies, the meaning of thematic analysis has yet to be accurately defined (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and is often renamed as another similar analysis such as 'narrative' or 'content'.

Boyatzis (1998) points out that 'observing' precedes 'encoding'; seeing something precedes the act of encoding it, i.e. seeing it as something that has meaning. This process precedes any kind of interpretation from the researcher. It is how the researcher perceives that data which dictates which themes are *seen* and are seen to be meaningful. This is intrinsically linked to the researcher's ontology.

Whilst recognising that the frequency of a recurring idea *may* point to a theme, there is no hard and fast rule which dictates the frequency of recurrence for it to be considered a theme. It is possible, therefore, for the researcher to afford greater time and effort to a theme that they deem to be significant to them (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Boyatzis (1998) alludes to the commensurability of thematic analysis with other forms of analysis and its ability to be used to assist communication between 'positivistic science' and 'interpretive science'. My choice of methodology resonates with this view as both the quantitative and qualitative stages of my study added additional levels of interpretation to the phenomenon being investigated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Cupchik, 2001).

## 3.7 Ethical considerations

A full ethics application was submitted to the University Faculty Ethics Committee and received a favourable review. All steps were taken to ensure that the research project was ethical according to guidelines outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). Written approval from the gatekeepers of all participant schools was sought and received (Appendix 1). An information sheet (Appendix 3) was provided to both students and parents for them to keep. It included my contact details in case they had any further queries about the research. Potential participants were reassured that their participation was entirely voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time without providing reason and that their data could be destroyed if they wished. Effort was made to reassure participants that it was not problematic to withdraw, which was further reiterated by myself at key stages throughout the data collection process. They were also reassured about the confidentiality of the data they provided and anonymity in reporting.

Child participants were recruited only after permission was sought from the headteachers of the participant schools. Verbal assent from each child was sought after a full explanation of the study in simple language they were able to understand. I encouraged the children to ask questions that they had at any time during the study. Both parents and children were informed that children could withdraw from the study at any time. Data collection from the research included consent forms, survey responses, audio recordings, and analysis derived from audio recordings. Consent forms were scanned and stored as PDF files. Audio recordings were stored as MP3 and WAV files to facilitate cross-platform accessibility.

During the data collection period, the consent forms were stored securely at my home. Personal details were kept separately from responses and a participant identifier was assigned to assist with linking them. All other data was stored on a secure, encrypted cloud-based storage platform (iCloud) which is password-protected. I was the only person with access to identifiable information about the participants. Only non-identifiable data was shared with others when findings were presented at conferences or discussed during supervision meetings. It was ensured that all data remained anonymised and kept non-identifiable according to known best practices.

Taking part in this research offered participants an opportunity to express and share their personal views on an aspect of the school curriculum and, in the case of parents, their child's education. Indirect benefits included contributing to knowledge about attitudes to foreign language learning.

## 3.8 Description of final sample

The aim was to obtain a sample that captured a reasonably representative sample of the population. There were challenges with achieving total representativeness in scientific terms, hence the purposive sampling criteria.

### 3.8.1 Student participants

The final number of student participants in the present study and their gender are outlined in Table 5.

| | | Count | % of final questionnaire sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 250 | 50.6 |
| | Female | 221 | 44.5 |
| | Prefer not to say | 24 | 4.9 |
| | Total | 495 | 100.0 |

*Table 5 Gender breakdown of student participants.*

It is clear that there was a reasonable gender ratio (excluding those wishing not to divulge their gender) which gives near-equal representation in the data of male and female views. A total number of 666 student questionnaires were distributed across the four schools which resulted in a 74.1% return. Whilst the questionnaires were completed during class time, the remainder of the uncompleted questionnaires arose from student absence from their timetabled MFL lesson and those who chose not to participate. Each student was given a questionnaire for a parent to complete, the return for which was considerably lower with the parental sample size being n=107 with a return of 16%.

### 3.8.2 Parent participants

When discussing the distribution of questionnaires to parents, I was warned by all participant school contacts not to expect a high response rate as parental engagement with the schools was infrequent. With this in mind, the participant schools made every effort to promote the importance of the questionnaire; one school included their participation in a weekly 'News Round' video which was posted on YouTube whilst the other schools

included a letter to parents with a deadline for completion. These efforts are echoed in Dörnyei (2007) as valid methods of improving questionnaire response rates.

| | | Count | % of final questionnaire sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 32 | 29.2 |
| | Female | 72 | 67.9 |
| | Prefer not to say | 3 | 2.8 |
| | Total | 107 | 100.0 |

*Table 6 Gender breakdown of parent participants.*

| | | Count | % of final questionnaire sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-25 | 1 | 0.9 |
| | 26-35 | 14 | 11.3 |
| | 36-45 | 59 | 55.7 |
| | 46-55 | 30 | 28.3 |
| | 56+ | 4 | 3.8 |
| | Total | 108 | 100.0 |

*Table 7 Age of parent participants.*

From these frequency tables, it is clear that, of the 107 parents who responded to the questionnaire, 67.9% of them were female. This emulates similar samples in recent studies on parental involvement such as Wilder (2017) whose resulting sample (n=173) consisted of 79.9% female (n=138) and 20.2% male (n=35). Reay (2000, 2005) also suggests that mothers are more emotionally involved in their child's learning than fathers and therefore invest more in their child's education at home.

When considering the age of parents who participated in the questionnaire, the largest percentage were aged between 36 and 55 (84%). There was one participant aged between 18-25 which is questionable as this person would

not be of age to have a child of 11-12. It is plausible that a student's sibling may have completed the questionnaire in place of the parent. For the purpose of this study, this participant has been excluded from the data analysis as their position as a parent is uncertain. The final parent sample for my study was, therefore, n=107.

Table 8 shows the breakdown of parents' employment status and Table 9 shows ethnic background.

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Full Time Employment | 58 | 54.2 |
| Part Time Employment | 30 | 28.0 |
| Unemployed | 7 | 6.5 |
| Retired | 4 | 3.7 |
| Volunteer Work | 1 | .9 |
| Full/Part Time Education | 4 | 3.7 |
| Other - Specify | 3 | 2.8 |
| Total | 107 | 100.0 |

*Table 8 Parents' Employment Status*

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| White British | 48 | 44.9 |
| White Other | 5 | 4.7 |
| Black Caribbean | 5 | 4.7 |
| Black African | 4 | 3.7 |
| Black Other | 1 | .9 |
| Asian Indian | 27 | 25.2 |
| Asian Pakistani | 15 | 14.0 |
| Other Mixed | 1 | .9 |
| Other - Specify | 1 | .9 |
| Total | 107 | 100.0 |

*Table 9 Parents' Ethnicity*

Every effort was taken to ensure a representative sample was achieved and as such, the number of white participants was relatively close to black and Asian participants (White British + other, n=53; Black, Asian and other,

n=54). In terms of employment, the largest proportion of parents who participated were either full-time or part-time employed.

As well as this demographic data, parents were also asked to report which language(s) is/are spoken in the home. Interestingly, there is a wide range of languages spoken at home and this could be an indication of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the present sample. Table 10 gives a breakdown of this information.

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Arabic/English | 2 | 1.9 |
| English/Punjabi | 3 | 2.8 |
| English | 60 | 56.1 |
| English/Gujarati | 1 | .9 |
| English/Kutchi | 1 | .9 |
| English/Polish | 1 | .9 |
| English/Pothwari | 1 | .9 |
| English/Punjabi | 16 | 15.0 |
| English/Spanish | 1 | .9 |
| English/Urdu | 6 | 5.6 |
| Mirpuri/Urdu | 1 | .9 |
| Polish | 3 | 2.8 |
| Punjabi | 5 | 4.7 |
| Punjabi/English | 2 | 1.9 |
| Slovak | 1 | .9 |
| Urdu | 1 | .9 |
| Urdu/English | 1 | .9 |
| Urdu/Spanish | 1 | .9 |
| Total | 107 | 100.0 |

*Table 10 Parents' home languages*

The largest percentage of parents speak English (56.1%), however, there is a significant number of participants who are bilingual and speak English with another foreign language, mainly of Asian origin. The location of the participant schools could account for this level of diversity within the present

sample as the majority of schools can be found near Birmingham, England's second largest city.

## 3.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have stated my theoretical position as a critical realist researcher and I have also highlighted my interest in quantitative research methods which can help to add a further dimension to my study.

The mixed-methods approach that I have used addresses the suggestion by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) and Gorard and Taylor (2004) that there is little research within the field of education and applied linguistics which combines interviews in particular with quantitative statistical analysis. My study will bridge this gap and bring together two schools of thought, otherwise considered incommensurable.

I have discussed the chosen methods for this study including their possible limitations. I have embraced these limitations and attempted to reduce any effects from these on the data being collected. A summary was provided of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses used in the study and I stated how the quantitative data from the questionnaires informed the qualitative stage within the sequential mixed-method study. This was followed by a discussion surrounding the ethical considerations of researching the behaviour and attitudes of children and young people as well as obtaining informed consent from adult participants. In the following chapter, I will present the findings from both stages of the research process and I will illustrate how these findings address the research questions underpinning this study.

# Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

## 4.1 Introduction

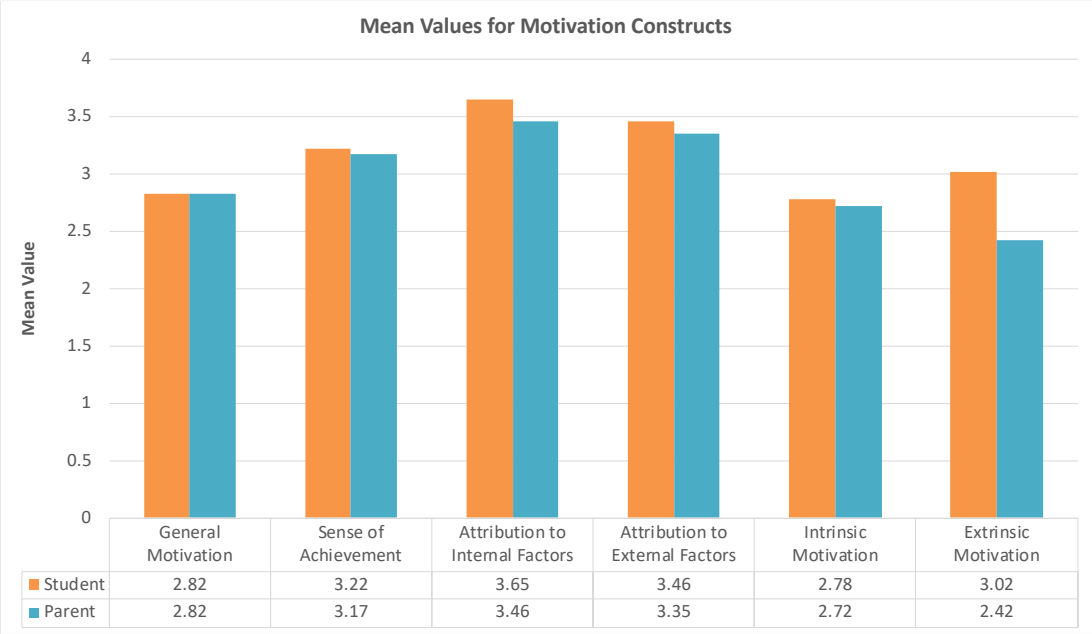
This chapter provides analysis and interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative data collected to address the research questions which underpin this study. The findings from the study are reported thematically according to each motivational construct, with these discussed in turn, drawing on key ideas from the literature. In line with a sequential mixed-methods research design, descriptive and inferential statistics provide the foundations for further layers of analysis using thick descriptions from qualitative interview data.

For the purpose of analysing the questionnaire responses (Appendix 5), I used descriptive statistics to give an overview of the data. For the Likert scale responses, the percentage frequency distribution for each statement is reported to show the proportion of responses within each construct. In order to investigate any possible relationship between the student and parent data, mean values were calculated for each construct by assigning a value between 1 and 5: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 indifferent, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree. Correlation Analysis was then used to analyse the data and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated using SPSS. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient is a value that represents the strength of a relationship between two variables. The closer the value is to +1, the stronger the positive relationship (Bryman, 2012). The correlation scatterplots can be found in Appendix 9.

## 4.2 The motivation constructs

The questionnaire data were analysed in SPSS and percentage frequency distributions were generated for students' and parents' responses for each

statement within the constructs. The column headings were shortened for ease of displaying the data: SD strongly disagree; D disagree; U undecided; A agree; SA strongly agree. As well as the percentage frequency distributions, the central tendency (mean) for each construct was collated in order to facilitate the inferential statistical analyses. These can be found in Graph 1.




| | General Motivation | Sense of Achievement | Attribution to Internal Factors | Attribution to External Factors | Intrinsic Motivation | Extrinsic Motivation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student | 2.82 | 3.22 | 3.65 | 3.46 | 2.78 | 3.02 |
| Parent | 2.82 | 3.17 | 3.46 | 3.35 | 2.72 | 2.42 |

*Graph 1 Mean values for motivation constructs*

The values shown in Graph 1 present an overall view of each motivation construct and the central tendency of the responses provided by the questionnaire participants.

### 4.2.1 General motivation

The data presented in Table 11 give an overview of the responses to statements 1-10 of the questionnaire. This construct aimed to measure children's overall motivation across all subjects at school and towards school life in general.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U % | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I always pay attention in my language lessons. | 4.4 | 7.9 | 25.5 | 39.6 | 22.6 |
| I often take part in extra-curricular activities related to languages. | 47.1 | 21.6 | 16.4 | 8.7 | 6.3 |
| I am never hardworking in my language lessons. | 7.1 | 7.1 | 13.9 | 27.9 | 44.0 |
| I often think about how I could learn a foreign language better. | 18.0 | 17.6 | 27.3 | 24.0 | 13.1 |
| I plan my evening so that I have time to study the language. | 37.0 | 25.3 | 21.2 | 11.9 | 4.6 |
| I spend more time on languages homework than other subjects. | 34.9 | 26.7 | 22.8 | 10.3 | 5.3 |
| I always have the feeling of being forced to study a foreign language. | 32.3 | 20.8 | 21.2 | 13.9 | 11.7 |
| I would study a language even if the school doesn't require it. | 27.9 | 20.2 | 23.0 | 14.3 | 14.5 |
| I will continue to learn the language after I finish school. | 29.3 | 17.0 | 32.5 | 12.5 | 8.7 |
| I always want to learn the foreign language well. | 11.3 | 12.7 | 24.4 | 20.0 | 20.0 |

*Table 11 Student responses for General Motivation questionnaire items*

This table presents some interesting responses from students with regards to their general motivation in school. At first glance, student responses appear to point to a largely low level of motivation towards languages and school in general with 44% strongly agreeing with the statement that they are never hardworking in language lessons. 48.1% (27.9% SD and 20.2% D) of students state that they would not study a language if the school made it optional. Nearly half of the students that took part in the study would consider discontinuing their language study if it was optional at their school. Additionally, students disagreed with the statement "I spend more time on languages homework than other subjects" (34.9% SD; 26.7% D).

This finding aligns with Williams et al. (2002, p. 509) who found that motivation in school in general declines when students progress into Years 8 and 9. In the participant schools, students choose their GCSE options in Year 8 or Year 9 and research shows that when obliged to study a subject, motivation has a tendency to decrease if the student does not wish to pursue the subject to a higher level. This also echoes the research of Coleman et al. (2007) who found that motivation to study a modern foreign language decreases as a student approaches their options choices or begins their GCSE study if a language is compulsory. A further interpretation of this level of motivation could be the increase in academic challenge presented by the subject and the associated potential decrease in parental involvement at home (Costa & Faria, 2017).

An independent samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in general motivation between males and female students. General motivation was reported to be higher in females ($M=2.97$) than males ($M=2.73$) and this difference was statistically significant ($p<0.001$) with an eta squared value of 0.03, meaning that 3% of variance in general motivation can be explained by gender.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U % | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I always paid attention in my language lessons. | 3.7 | 7.5 | 25.2 | 40.2 | 23.4 |
| I often took part in extra-curricular activities related to languages. | 37.4 | 27.1 | 10.3 | 19.6 | 5.6 |
| I was always hardworking in my language lessons. | 5.6 | 11.2 | 17.8 | 43.0 | 22.4 |
| I often thought about how I could learn a foreign language better. | 9.3 | 25.2 | 22.4 | 23.4 | 19.6 |
| I used to plan my evening so that I had time to study the language. | 26.2 | 34.6 | 18.7 | 9.3 | 11.2 |
| I used to spend more time on languages homework than other subjects. | 41.1 | 27.1 | 17.8 | 11.2 | 2.8 |
| I always had the feeling of being forced to study a foreign language. | 23.4 | 30.8 | 17.8 | 17.8 | 10.3 |
| I would have studied a language even if the school didn't require it. | 28.0 | 22.4 | 14.0 | 21.5 | 14.0 |
| I continued to learn the language after I had finished school. | 43.9 | 27.1 | 5.6 | 12.1 | 11.2 |
| I always wanted to learn the foreign language well. | 8.4 | 18.7 | 24.3 | 24.3 | 24.3 |

*Table 12 Percentage totals for Parental General Motivation*

Parental data for general motivation (Table 12) appears to mirror that of the students with 68.2% of parents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement regarding spending more time on language homework than other subjects. Additionally, 28% of parents suggested that they would not have chosen a language if the school made it optional and a significantly large percentage (71%) chose not to continue their language study beyond school. On the other hand, the parental data appears to show quite positive orientations overall in terms of general motivation with a large proportion of parents reporting that they were hardworking in lessons and always paid attention.

The Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (*r*) was calculated using the central tendency (mean) of paired data where both a student and his/her parent completed a questionnaire (n=107). It is important to note that correlation analysis shows if there is an association and it is not an indication of causality. The *r*-value was calculated by inputting the bivariate data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the *r*-value for general motivation can be seen in Table 13.

| | | Student General Motivation |
|---|---|---|
| Parent General Motivation | Pearson Correlation | .824** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 107 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 13 Student/Parent Correlation for General Motivation*

The r-value indicates a strong positive relationship between student and parent motivation ($r = +0.824$) and this value is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$). This means that there is a 1 in 100 chance of wrongly rejecting the null hypothesis of no relationship between parent and student general motivation. The benchmark value in social science research as stated by Bryman (2012) is $p<0.05$, i.e. 1 in 50 chance of wrongly rejecting the null hypothesis. It is therefore possible for me to reject the null hypothesis with an appropriate level of certainty.

Some further insights related to these findings were generated from the interviews with parents and students. As discussed in Chapter 2, motivation is not a unitary construct and may also fluctuate. This is illustrated by the reflections of the student participants in particular. When asked about their general behaviour in lessons, they related it to their energy levels and class behaviour. Two male students felt that their general motivation in school

was affected by the behaviour of other students in their teaching group who do not attach importance to their language learning. One student in particular mentioned that behaviour was much better in core subjects such as English and mathematics, and suggested the reason for this could be the perceived status of these subjects within the school curriculum and the optional status of MFL:

> "Maybe because they think it's not such an important subject [MFL], so they don't think they need to take it that serious, rather than the ones they have to do". (Male student, White British, School D)

This finding is refuted by Bartram (2010) who states that even if a whole-school policy of 'Languages for All' exists in the school, it would have no real effect on the attitudes and motivation of students towards learning a foreign language. A whole-school policy which states that all students must study a foreign language may not improve motivation overall.

A further consideration could be how language lessons are timetabled within the school curriculum. Two male students in School A had MFL lessons straight after a Physical Education (PE) lesson and suggested the possibility of being energised and 'hyped' [sic] which could affect an individual's concentration. This suggestion aligns with the idea that motivation is not unitary and is a dynamic construct that can fluctuate on many levels; in this case, motivation is suggested to be affected on a temporal level due to the timing of MFL lessons throughout the day.

The interview data showed that parents were critical of their classroom experiences which, to some extent, could have affected their general motivation. As I have argued elsewhere (page 93), effective teaching is pivotal to ensuring that students do not become demotivated, and this research demonstrated how shortfalls in teaching approaches can affect the

motivation of learners. For example, in response to a question related to teaching activities and lessons in general, two parents spoke about how their teachers affected their experiences at school:

> "This may be a horrible thing to say, but the French teacher was a bit of a perv, so this put the kibosh on learning any French to be honest." (Female Parent, White British, School C)

> "The French teacher shouted quite a lot, so he was quite a volcanic man, shall I say! He was an exceptional teacher […] but he didn't have a lot of patience with those who found it more challenging." (Female Parent, White British, School A)

These parents' accounts of their classroom experiences exemplify what Lamb (2017) terms 'frustrating classroom experiences'. Such experiences are often considered a key demotivational factor for students, along with other complex internal/external factors (Weiner, 1985; Lightbody et al., 1996; Siann et al., 1996). These are experiences which can cause learners to become despondent and, ultimately, demotivated. With greater pressure placed on teachers to cover the required curriculum content, some teachers become demotivated themselves. This situation can affect student motivation through factors such as low enthusiasm for their subject due to increased workload and a lack of attention to individual student needs (Lamb, 2017).

### 4.2.2 Sense of achievement

This construct was concerned with the extent to which parents and students felt they had a sense of achievement from studying a modern foreign language. This was measured by statements 11-15 of the questionnaire. The

percentage frequency distribution for responses on each statement are displayed in Table 14.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U% | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I find learning the foreign language difficult. | 11.1 | 24.2 | 18.8 | 26.3 | 19.6 |
| I always want to be better at the language than my classmates. | 15.2 | 22.8 | 25.3 | 21.4 | 15.4 |
| I am happy with my grades I have for languages. | 8.5 | 9.9 | 26.9 | 31.5 | 23.2 |
| Learning a foreign language gives me a feeling of success. | 13.1 | 14.1 | 31.1 | 25.1 | 16.6 |
| I have good ability in learning a foreign language. | 8.3 | 14.7 | 34.1 | 30.9 | 11.9 |

*Table 14 Percentage totals for Student Sense of Achievement in MFL*

Overall, students reported generally high levels of sense of achievement in MFL with 31.5% of students agreeing and 23.2% saying that they are happy with their grades for languages. This is regardless of 45.9% of students stating that they find languages difficult. The perceived difficulty of learning a foreign language has been reported in a number of studies as a key barrier to students continuing with MFLL beyond the compulsory age (Barton, 1997; Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Broady, 2005; Coleman et al., 2007; Coleman, 2009; Jones, 2009; Taylor & Marsden, 2014). Barton (1997) states that one of the key demotivating factors for choosing to study a foreign language is the perception of the language's difficulty. This is echoed by Coleman (2009), more than a decade later, who states that the unpopularity of languages stems from students who found them difficult. Pachler (2007) also attributed the decline in students choosing further language study to its perceived difficulty and 'consequent likely negative impact on grades and progression' (p. 4).

These responses could be attributed to a number of factors such as the teacher's use of praise in the classroom and possible rewards systems in

place at the school. School A, for example, has a praise system of merits or 'EPraise' where students accrue points in exchange for a voucher at the end of term if they accrue the most points in the year group. The other participant schools have similar systems of praise including stickers in exercise books and praise postcards which are sent home to parents. These factors could come together to give the student a sense of achievement and satisfaction which is defined by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998, p. 207) as 'concerning the outcome of a task or activity combined with extrinsic reward such as praise or good marks and to intrinsic rewards such as enjoyment and pride'. There is also a connection between sense of achievement and extrinsic motivation as grades and rewards, amongst other examples, are considered as motivating factors for students, with grades in particular being 'owned' and are therefore personally important to the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The independent samples t-test was used to determine any statistically significant difference in sense of achievement in MFL between male and female students. The test concluded that the difference between means was statistically significant (males, $M=3.12$; females, $M=3.34$, $p<0.001$) with a small effect size (eta squared=0.02). This value means that 2% of the variance in sense of achievement in MFL can be explained by gender.

Parental questionnaire data (Table 15) revealed a largely positive orientation towards sense of achievement in MFL with 43% of respondents reporting a feeling of success from learning a foreign language which was marginally higher compared to the students (41.7%), the largest percentage of whom were undecided.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U % | A% | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I found learning the foreign language difficult. | 12.1 | 21.5 | 21.5 | 29.0 | 15.9 |
| I always wanted to be better at the language than my classmates. | 15.9 | 21.5 | 31.8 | 15.9 | 15.0 |
| I was happy with my grade I achieved for languages. | 10.3 | 12.1 | 27.1 | 34.6 | 15.9 |
| Learning a foreign language gave me a feeling of success. | 12.1 | 13.1 | 31.8 | 32.7 | 10.3 |
| I had good ability in learning a foreign language. | 6.5 | 15.9 | 29.0 | 37.4 | 11.2 |

*Table 15 Percentage totals for Parental Sense of Achievement in MFL*

In line with student responses, a large proportion of parents (45%) also reported that they found language learning difficult (29% agree; 15.9% strongly agree). Confoundingly, 48.6% of parents, however, reported that they had good ability in the foreign language irrespective of the difficulty that they faced in class.

When the questionnaire data were subjected to statistical analysis, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient for this construct showed a moderate positive relationship (r = +0.444) between parent and student sense of achievement in MFLL, as shown in Table 16. The r-value is statistically significant ($p<0.01$) which means that the null hypothesis of no relationship between student and parent sense of achievement in MFLL can be rejected.

| | | Student Sense of Achievement |
|---|---|---|
| Parent Sense of Achievement | Pearson Correlation | .444** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 107 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 16 Student & Parent Correlation for Sense of Achievement in MFL*

As discussed in chapter 3, regression analysis was also used to add a further layer of analysis. For the sense of achievement construct, this showed that parental level of education, which can also be taken as an indication of socio-economic status, had a positive statistically significant effect on student sense of achievement in MFL (eta squared=0.141, $p<0.01$). This means that parental level of education can account for 14.1% of the variance in mean scores for student sense of achievement. According to Fritz & Morris (2012), this is considered a medium effect size.

Time and other resources made available by parents to support their child's education have been suggested as key contributing factors to positive parental involvement in their child's learning. As stated in the literature (Ausubel, 1968; Jeynes, 2007; Jones, 2009; Tam, 2009; Gayton, 2010; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Bubić & Tošić, 2016), parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to offer less time and resources to their child's education due to lack of means or educational values, therefore potentially hindering a child's accrual of cultural capital.

There are other possible factors that could affect a child's sense of achievement that go beyond actual attainment associated with socio-economic status. These could include pressures of being a single-parent family and the need to support the family financially. Jeynes (2007) and Hornby and Lafaele (2011) also suggest other social factors, including ethnicity, gender and class which could impact on a child's learning.

### 4.2.3 Attribution of Success/Failure in MFL

This construct was examined to ascertain the extent to which students and parents attributed their success or failure in language learning to factors that are internal or external to the individual. This was of particular interest given that attribution and self-determination theories are key in foreign language motivation research. In both student and parent questionnaires, statements

16, 19 and 20 related to internal factors and statements 17 and 18 to external factors. Table 17 displays the percentage totals for each of the statements related to attribution.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U% | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. If I make greater effort, I could be good at foreign languages. | 7.5 | 8.9 | 19.8 | 32.9 | 30.9 |
| 17. If I do badly in my languages tests, I usually know how to improve for next time. | 8.5 | 11.1 | 25.1 | 32.9 | 22.4 |
| 18. How I do in languages is not a matter of luck. | 8.7 | 11.9 | 29.9 | 27.1 | 22.4 |
| 19. I feel in control of my language learning. | 10.3 | 14.7 | 27.3 | 31.1 | 16.6 |
| 20. It is my own responsibility to do well in the foreign language. | 3.4 | 6.7 | 17.4 | 35.8 | 36.8 |

*Table 17 Percentage scores for Student Attribution of Success/Failure*

This data reveals that a large proportion of the students agree (32.9%) or strongly agree (30.9%) that with greater effort, they could become better at foreign languages. The respondents also reported feeling in control of their language learning, a strong sense of responsibility and about half reported awareness of how to improve if they do badly. According to Weiner (1985), effort is internal to the individual and within their locus of control meaning that it can be regulated by the individual should they so wish. Task difficulty is considered external to the individual and outside of their locus of control, requiring greater regulation of effort in order to overcome the difficulty.

These findings echo the research undertaken by Williams et al. (2004) involving students studying French, German and Spanish in UK secondary schools. They found that student respondents to their questionnaire attributed success/failure to internal factors (61.7%) more than external ones (30.3%). The remaining 8% of respondents considered this achievement a hybrid of internal/external factors including ambiguous interpretations of 'interest'; being interested in something would be

considered as internal i.e. being interested *in* the subject, whereas finding a subject interesting would be considered external i.e. the subject *itself* is interesting.

The views of the parents appear to match those of the students, particularly for those statements mentioned previously. The parental data is presented in Table 18 below.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U % | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| If I made greater effort, I could have been good at the language. | 6.5 | 8.4 | 20.6 | 41.1 | 23.4 |
| If I did badly in my languages tests, I usually knew how to improve for next time. | 7.5 | 12.1 | 29.9 | 40.2 | 10.3 |
| How I did in languages was not a matter of luck. | 12.1 | 6.5 | 25.2 | 39.3 | 16.8 |
| I felt in control of my language learning. | 10.3 | 20.6 | 29.0 | 29.9 | 10.3 |
| It was my own responsibility to do well in the foreign language. | 6.5 | 9.3 | 19.6 | 42.1 | 22.4 |

*Table 18 Percentage scores for Parent Attribution of Success/Failure*

Although marginal, students appeared to feel more in control of their language learning than their parents were. This could also be partly accounted for by the higher percentage score (72.6%) for the statement regarding taking one's own responsibility for language learning.

In order to gain a more detailed understanding of the role of attribution in achievement in MFLL, the data were subjected to inferential statistical analysis to test for underlying relationships. It was necessary to separate out the data for internal and external factors (items 16, 18 and 17, 19, 20 on the questionnaires respectively) in order to generate a value for each form of attribution.

Table 19 presents the correlation between the mean values for student and parent attribution of internal factors of achievement in MFLL.

| | | Student Internal Attribution |
|---|---|---|
| Parent Internal Attribution | Pearson Correlation | .533** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 107 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 19 Student & Parent correlation for Internal Attribution of success/failure in MFLL*

The correlation for student and parent attribution of internal factors indicates a moderately strong positive relationship (r = +0.533) which is statistically significant (p<0.01). This means that, for the present sample, I can say with reasonable certainty that there is a relationship in the data between student and parent attribution of success or failure to internal factors.

The parental interview data illustrate how ability was seen by interviewees as a key factor in succeeding or failing in modern foreign language learning:

> "She [my daughter] is in Year 8 and she's already hitting B grades in her assessments, so without putting pressure on her, I don't expect anything less than a Grade 9 in French and Punjabi. And she's very talented, intelligent and academic. She has only ever been in the top set and she's within the top 5 for Maths and Science [...]." (Female parent, Asian Indian, School B)

The interview extract above illustrates the participant's thoughts on two key ideas, effort and ability, both of which are internal to the individual.

Similarly, Williams et al.'s (2004) study found that effort and ability were within the top three of the twenty-one attributions for doing well that students offered in their questionnaire responses.

The correlation between student and parent mean values for external attribution of achievement in MFL is particularly interesting and is presented in Table 20. It is apparent from the table that there appears to be little or no correlation between student and parent mean values for this construct.

| | | Student External Attribution |
|---|---|---|
| Parent External Attribution | Pearson Correlation | .059 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .547 |
| | N | 107 |

*Table 20 Student & Parent correlation for External Attribution of success/failure in MFLL*

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation value points to a very weak positive relationship; however the value is *not* statistically significant. I must, therefore, accept the null hypothesis that there is *no* relationship between student and parent views on the attribution of success or failure in MFLL to external factors. The linear regression analysis of this data also yielded no significant findings, indicating that parental independent variables such as level of education or language learning experience bear no significant influence on students' external attribution scores.

However, although not evident in the correlation findings, there were some commonalities between parent and student interview responses relating to external attribution. The perceived difficulty of modern foreign languages was a key theme that emerged from the qualitative data and something that is considered an external, stable factor in the attribution of success/failure in MFL. Both parents and students expressed concerns over the severity of grading in MFL and the increased amount and difficulty of course content;

however, it was the parents who expressed the greatest concern. For instance:

> "I was told that the gap, the leap between GCSE and A Level was too big and that I might struggle with it." (Female parent, White British, School B)

> "I do remember it being hard and the other students not having a very good attitude. There was a lot of messing about and people feeling quite self-conscious and being a bit silly and not wanting to speak the language." (Female parent, White British, School B)

> "At a recent parents' evening, speaking with her French teacher, the things we covered at A Level, like the subjunctive, things like that, has all now shifted down into GCSE, and I was quite shocked to know that a lot of the stuff we covered in A Level, she will be covering in her GCSE." (Female parent, Asian Indian, School C)

Dörnyei (2003) discusses attribution of success or failure in learning, restating perceived difficulty as an issue. If a student attributes failure at a particular task to low ability, it is likely that the student will not try this task or similar again. In contrast, if the student believes that task failure could be attributed to poor effort or ineffective learning methods, then the likelihood is that the student would give the task another try.

A further noteworthy point is that of gender difference. Gender and attribution theory has been well-researched and it is widely attested that males tend to attribute their academic success to dispositional factors such as hard work and ability, whereas females tend to attribute their success to

situational factors such as task difficulty and luck (Archer, 1992; Taylor et al., 1993; Lightbody et al., 1996; Siann et al., 1996).

In order to investigate if this was the case for the present study, an independent samples t-test was conducted to see if there was any significant difference between the data for boys and girls for both internal and external attribution. The central tendency (mean) values for internal attribution show a higher value for females (M=3.80) than for males (M=3.57). This could suggest that the female students in the present sample tend to attribute achievement in MFL more to internal factors such as effort and ability compared to male students. An independent samples t-test reported a statistically significant difference between the student data for internal attribution. The magnitude of the differences in the mean scores was small. This suggests that 2% of the variance in the data for internal attribution of success/failure in MFLL can be explained by gender. For external attribution, the t-test also yielded a statistically significant difference (males, M=3.32; females, M=3.65). The magnitude of the difference in the mean scores for external attribution was also small. This finding suggests that 3% of the variance in the data for external attribution can be explained by gender.

These results are similar to those of Williams et al. (2004) who found that a higher number of girls attributed their success/failure in MFL learning to internal factors within their locus of control such as effort, strategy and ability compared to the boys. Lightbody et al. (1996) also found that boys placed greater emphasis on external factors such as luck, whereas the girls placed greater emphasis on hard work and effort. These results, as well as those of the present study, are confounding since previously reported data (Spence & Helmreich, 1983; Weiner, 1985; Gaeddert, 1987) points to the opposite: males tend to attribute their success to talent, ability and effort, whereas females tend to attribute their success to circumstantial factors such as luck.

### 4.2.4 Intrinsic motivation

This construct aimed to measure the extent to which students were motivated by a sense of internal reward and satisfaction, in this case, learning a foreign language. Intrinsic motivation is widely regarded as an important component of Self-Determination Theory and underpins much of the research into foreign language motivation (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994, 2001, 2003; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Table 21 presents the percentage frequency distribution for each statement related to the Intrinsic Motivation construct.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U% | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am never interested in learning a foreign language. | 7.9 | 11.3 | 20.2 | 29.7 | 30.9 |
| I like reading foreign language newspapers, magazines or books. | 48.3 | 21.4 | 17.6 | 6.9 | 5.9 |
| I like watching films in the foreign language that I learn. | 33.3 | 14.9 | 16.4 | 17.6 | 17.8 |
| I enjoy meeting and talking to others in the foreign language. | 25.1 | 17.0 | 26.3 | 21.2 | 10.5 |
| I enjoy using the foreign language wherever possible. | 23.8 | 18.0 | 24.6 | 20.8 | 12.7 |
| I feel comfortable when I have to speak the foreign language that I learn in front of others. | 24.8 | 19.8 | 27.7 | 14.9 | 12.7 |
| I would like to live where they speak the language that I learn. | 33.5 | 18.4 | 27.1 | 10.5 | 10.5 |
| I am interested in the lifestyle and culture of the country whose language I learn at school. | 15.8 | 13.3 | 25.9 | 24.4 | 20.6 |

*Table 21 Percentage scores for Student Intrinsic Motivation*

Strikingly, the percentages for the first statement of this construct paint a rather bleak picture in terms of the intrinsic motivation of the student sample. The majority of the responses to this statement point to students not being interested in learning a foreign language. These figures are disappointing to a language teacher as it shows that students in the sample

have little love, desire, or personal enjoyment from learning a foreign language.

Furthermore, the data indicates that many students are not intrinsically motivated to extend their language learning beyond the classroom by reading books or magazines and watching films in the target language. 48.3% of the students strongly disagreed with the statement "I like reading foreign language newspapers, magazines or books" followed by a further 21.4% who disagreed with the same statement. Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 56) suggest that intrinsic motivation could be defined in terms of the task being of interest, whereas some researchers define it as the satisfaction one gains from 'intrinsically motivated task engagement'. When applied to an educational context, it is believed that intrinsic motivation is pivotal in securing academic success; challenge, stimulation and autonomy are considered key factors that contribute to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 1985, 2000; Dörnyei, 1994). Interestingly, whilst the students exhibit a low level of intrinsic motivation for MFL, there appears to be an interest among nearly half of the student participants, however, in the target language culture and lifestyle (24.4% A; 20.6% SA).

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine any statistically significant difference in mean scores for male and female students for intrinsic motivation. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female students (males, $M=2.71$; females, $M=2.94$, $p<0.005$) with a small effect size (eta squared=0.02). This means that 2% of the variance in means for intrinsic motivation can be accounted for by gender.

The percentage scores for parental intrinsic motivation (Table 22) appear to duplicate the views of the students with the findings leaning towards a lack of interest in learning a foreign language.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U % | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I was never interested in learning a foreign language. | 8.4 | 13.1 | 22.4 | 27.1 | 29.0 |
| I like reading foreign language newspapers, magazines or books. | 43.9 | 18.7 | 16.8 | 13.1 | 7.5 |
| I like watching films in the foreign language that I learnt. | 40.2 | 16.8 | 15.0 | 18.7 | 9.3 |
| I enjoy meeting and talking to others in the foreign language. | 30.8 | 15.9 | 16.8 | 26.2 | 10.3 |
| I enjoy using the foreign language wherever possible. | 26.2 | 17.8 | 17.8 | 28.0 | 10.3 |
| I feel comfortable when I have to speak the foreign language that I learnt in front of others. | 35.5 | 23.4 | 18.7 | 15.9 | 6.5 |
| I would like to live where they speak the language that I learnt. | 31.8 | 23.4 | 16.8 | 15.0 | 13.1 |
| I am interested in the lifestyle and culture of the country whose language I learnt at school. | 16.8 | 15.0 | 13.1 | 39.3 | 15.9 |

*Table 22 Percentage scores for Parental Intrinsic Motivation*

The percentages for strongly disagreeing and disagreeing with the statements for this construct are generally high, however, nearly 40% of the parents in the present sample reported enjoying using the foreign language. The highest percentages are repeated in the parental data for statements regarding the extension of language learning beyond the classroom through engaging with books, magazines and films in the target language, the same views as acknowledged in the student data.

For students to succeed at any subject, they require a level of intrinsic motivation as it is the curiosity and desire to do well in the subject that could be the driving force for success (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). It would therefore be a concern to language teachers that the student participants exhibit a low level of intrinsic motivation for MFL, thus a lack of desire or curiosity for the subject. One further observation would be that *parents* also exhibit low intrinsic motivation for language learning which could influence their children when engaging with MFL-related activities both inside and outside of school. In order to examine this possible relationship between parent and child

intrinsic motivation, the mean scores were correlated. The outcome of the correlation can be seen in Table 23.

| | | Student Intrinsic Motivation |
|---|---|---|
| Parent Intrinsic Motivation | Pearson Correlation | .730** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 107 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 23 Student & Parent Correlation for Intrinsic Motivation*

The correlation analysis shows that there is a strong positive relationship (r = +0.730) between parent and child intrinsic motivation scores which is statistically significant ($p<0.01$). This indicates an association between parent and child intrinsic motivation for participants in the study that could be generalised to other secondary school students in Year 8 and their parents.

Related to this is the notion of habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) which, for the purpose of the present study, is broadly defined as having access to cultural, social, economic and emotional resources in order to fulfil specific activities. Possible sources of cultural capital could also include parental reading practices and access to literature at home. Bourdieu (1986) also states that cultural capital and habitus is inherited from parents until such a time when a child is able to accrue his/her own.

Overseas travel with school and parents also contributes to developing cultural capital and this was mentioned on a number of occasions by students and parents. One parent spoke of being brought up by grandparents, and how having very little money meant limited exposure to cultural activities or holidays. She mentioned that this was something that she missed out on as a child and therefore wanted her own child to have the

experience that she never did. Her son had visited Germany a couple of days before the interview which he described as being 'pretty good' [sic]. However, discussions about the value of school overseas excursions with students indicated they had gained very little opportunity during the trip to be autonomous in their communication with native speakers.

Two male students also mentioned their experiences of visiting Normandy during which they did activities in the target language and experienced total immersion. This required the students to be autonomous in their communication with native speakers and creative with their language production on different topics related to daily life in the target language country. Both students had mothers who had studied French and/or Spanish to GCSE level and above and were therefore able to draw on their mother's language learning experiences and cultural understanding to support and develop their own.

Regression analysis of the parental and student data for intrinsic motivation yielded interesting results. Parental level of education (eta squared=0.107, $p<0.01$) and level of language learning (eta squared=0.158, $p<0.01$) both had statistically significant effects on student levels of intrinsic motivation. The level of parent education was found to explain 10.7% of the variance in mean scores for student intrinsic motivation and parental level of language learning to account for 15.8% of the variance in the same dependent variable. These findings could be accounted for by general parental educational values and attitudes towards education, as well as by parents' knowledge, skills and confidence in relation to education, and MFLL more specifically. For example, Costa and Faria (2017) state that parental engagement in learning decreases as a child progresses through the school system as many parents feel that they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to support their children with more academically challenging work. Due to the specialist nature of language learning, languages appear

near the bottom of the list of subjects in which parents feel the most confident to support their children (Costa & Faria, 2017).

However, parents who engage their children in cultural activities such as overseas travel (Dörnyei, 1990) and who have experienced language learning to a higher level are able to instil an interest for languages and possibly encourage them to choose foreign language study beyond the compulsory stage (aged 11-14 years). Overseas travel in particular could be considered a key cultural activity that exposes children to different ways of life and is also an excellent opportunity for them to experience the target language used in real-life contexts. The opportunity to go abroad with school was mentioned by all of the students interviewed with the majority having visited France or Germany. One student (Female, White British, School C) had not been on a school trip to a target language country but would be going on a cross-curricular trip to Iceland.

The interview data help to explain the relationship that is suggested by the correlation of parent and child mean values for this construct. Both parents and students in the interview sample alluded to being intrinsically motivated through their personal enjoyment in MFL, with students mentioning that lessons are fun, involving and interactive. More specifically, parents spoke of their wish to continue their language learning:

> "I got an A in GCSE German and I wanted to do A Level but I was discouraged from doing it." (Female parent, White British, School D)

> "I've gone back to German and I've started Spanish and I've done a tiny bit of French. I do the Spanish course through the university. But I'm mostly using audiobooks and Duolingo." (Female parent, White British, School D)

It is clear from these interview extracts that many of the participants in this sample showed signs of intrinsic motivation to study a foreign language, even in the face of discouragement from others. Dörnyei (1990) states that learning a language presents an individual with new stimuli and different experiences which could be considered an intrinsic motive. His study found that there was a strong correlation between this intrinsic motive and 'communicative sociocultural language use' such as tourism and making friends with people who speak the foreign language. This is echoed by Coleman et al. (2007) who posit that intrinsic enjoyment for languages is heightened thanks to clear lesson outcomes and a varied approach to classroom activities. An interesting point raised in the second quote is the apparent 'dampening' of this participant's intrinsic motivation for foreign languages by not allowing them to continue with further study. This could have been for any number of reasons; however, the academic 'leap' from GCSE to A level, suggested by the interview participant's teacher, is significant (Stephenson, 2019) in terms of content and language complexity.

### 4.2.5 Extrinsic motivation

As discussed previously, (Chapter 2, p. 22), extrinsic motivation can be defined as doing something for extrinsic rewards such as praise or receiving good marks (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Dörnyei, 2003). It is possible to add to this definition by including career aspirations and future travel ambitions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Also as discussed in Chapter 2, extrinsic motivation can take different forms depending on the conditions and the tasks with which the individual finds themselves. Table 24 shows the percentage frequency distribution responses for student extrinsic motivation.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U% | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I study a language because school requires me to. | 7.3 | 13.3 | 19.2 | 26.9 | 33.3 |
| I study a foreign language to help with finding a better job in the future. | 19.2 | 14.7 | 25.7 | 21.6 | 18.8 |
| I study French/German/Spanish/_____ because it is an international language. | 16.0 | 11.9 | 34.7 | 23.2 | 14.1 |
| My parents or other family members expect me to study a foreign language well. | 16.2 | 14.1 | 25.3 | 25.5 | 19.0 |
| I think that people will respect me more for learning a foreign language. | 21.6 | 16.4 | 33.3 | 20.6 | 8.1 |
| I study a foreign language to make myself look good. | 41.0 | 24.6 | 21.2 | 7.9 | 5.3 |
| I think studying a language is a sign of an educated person. | 13.3 | 12.1 | 25.3 | 29.5 | 19.8 |
| I study another language because it helps with other academic subjects. | 18.6 | 14.7 | 25.5 | 22.2 | 19.0 |

*Table 24 Percentage scores for Student Extrinsic Motivation*

The data in the table suggest that students in the current sample appear to be more extrinsically motivated than intrinsically as illustrated by the higher agreement of the statements: "I think studying a language is a sign of an educated person" and "My parents or other family members expect me to study a foreign language well." Working to impress others and to achieve a certain status could be considered as goals which are key to motivating an individual extrinsically. Interestingly, only a small minority agreed that studying a foreign language would help with finding a better job with the largest proportion of responses being non-committal.

Whilst the student sample suggests low intrinsic motivation towards MFL learning, this could be compensated for by higher levels of extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Bartram, 2010). Students' views on studying a language for their self-image appear largely negative with two thirds of students either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement. This could be partly accounted for by the larger proportion of male respondents

in the sample (n=250) compared to female (n=221). The effect of gender on student motivation in MFL has been widely discussed in previous MFL motivation research (Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Jones & Jones, 2001; Williams et al., 2002; Atherton, 2005; Bartram, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Coleman et al., 2007; Jones, 2009; Gayton, 2010). Previous research suggests that languages as a subject are perceived as feminine and only taught by female teachers and could encourage negative views from a male perspective due to the higher proportion of female students who choose to study a language compared to male students (Lamb, 2017; Martin, 2020). It is also widely reported that girls consistently outperform boys in language assessments (Williams et al., 2002), potential causes of which could include the child's social environment at home and school, parental encouragement and the lack of male role models due to a shortage of male language teachers in the profession leading to French in particular being seen as a female-dominated subject.

The data in Table 25 presents the percentage frequency distributions for responses to items associated with parental extrinsic motivation and the findings appear striking.

| Statement | SD % | D % | U % | A % | SA % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I studied MFL to fulfil a university language requirement. | 41.1 | 16.8 | 13.1 | 19.6 | 9.3 |
| I studied a foreign language to help with finding a better job in the future. | 38.3 | 25.2 | 17.8 | 11.2 | 7.5 |
| I studied French/German/Spanish because it is an international language. | 29.0 | 16.8 | 12.1 | 28.0 | 14.0 |
| My parents or other family members expected me to study a foreign language well. | 40.2 | 24.3 | 15.0 | 11.2 | 9.3 |
| I thought that people would respect me more for learning a foreign language. | 37.4 | 25.2 | 15.9 | 14.0 | 7.5 |
| I studied a foreign language to add to my social status. | 45.8 | 22.4 | 13.1 | 14.0 | 4.7 |
| I think studying a language is a sign of an educated person. | 25.2 | 16.8 | 15.9 | 28.0 | 14.0 |
| I studied another language because it helped with other academic subjects. | 28.0 | 28.0 | 24.3 | 13.1 | 6.5 |

*Table 25 Percentage scores for Parental Extrinsic Motivation*

It is undeniable that the parents, who are predominantly female in the present sample, exhibit low levels of extrinsic motivation towards MFL learning. Studying a language to add to one's social status was vehemently disagreed with and a high percentage (68.2%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, many parents disagreed that people would respect them for learning a foreign language (37.4% SD; 25.2% D). Interestingly and somewhat confoundingly, however, a significant proportion of parents believed that studying a language was a sign of an educated person (28% A; 14% SA).

To add a further layer of analysis, the mean scores for boys and girls on extrinsic motivation were subjected to an independent-samples t-test to see if there were any significant differences in extrinsic motivation accountable by gender as an independent variable. The t-test revealed that there was a

statistically significant difference in mean scores for extrinsic motivation accountable by sex (male, M=2.99; female, M=3.14, $p<0.05$). The magnitude of the difference in means was small (eta-squared = 0.01) which shows that 1% of the variance in mean scores for student extrinsic motivation was explained by gender.

When examining the interview data, this outcome appears to confirm what emerged when speaking to parents as the majority of parents, who were all female, mentioned grades and assessment scores more so than the students. The data could also suggest that parents were concerned about enhancing their children's future career prospects, something which was not evident in the questionnaire data. Students, on the other hand, were more attuned to skills and competencies required for learning a foreign language. They were also more aware of the usefulness of languages when considering career paths and future travel plans which would align more with the outcome for student extrinsic motivation (Diamantatou & Hawes, 2015).

> "[...] it goes towards your job applications and can give you that little bit of a push towards the jobs you can get and it can give you confidence as well." (Male 1 student, White British, School A)

> "It opens so many doors in terms of careers and just experience in life." (Female student, White British, School C)

> "If you speak just a couple [of languages], you can do great in life and you can get really top positions...especially in...even in the UK, you don't have to go out of the UK to do well if you've got a language on your side." (Male 2 student, White British, School A)

"I don't think it should be made compulsory but I do know that employers are looking for people who have language experience." (Female student, White British, School C)

"I think of it as a really good opportunity, that it can help you later on in life when you get a career, possibly in a foreign country and it's helpful to have a language or two." (Male 2 student, White British, School A)

The two mean values for statements related to extrinsic motivation were correlated in order to examine the strength of any possible relationship between students' and parents' extrinsic motivation scores. The correlation analysis in Table 26 gives a Pearson's *r*-value of +0.89 which indicates a very strong positive relationship. The value is statistically significant ($p>0.01$) which suggests that I can confidently reject the null hypothesis of no relationship.

| | | Student Extrinsic Motivation |
|---|---|---|
| Parent Extrinsic Motivation | Pearson Correlation | .890** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 107 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 26 Student & Parent correlation for Extrinsic Motivation*

The correlation suggests a strong positive association between the parent and student questionnaire data that is statistically significant, meaning the null hypothesis of no relationship can be rejected. The linear regression analysis for student extrinsic motivation yielded noteworthy results. Three parental independent variables account for variance in student extrinsic motivation: parental level of education (eta squared = 0.108, $p<0.05$), parental level of language learning (eta squared = 0.158, $p<0.01$) and

parental ethnicity (eta squared = 0.296, $p<0.01$). This means that 10.8% of variance of mean scores for student extrinsic motivation can be partially explained by parental level of education. Similarly, 15.8% can be explained by parental level of language learning and finally, the largest effect is that of parental ethnicity which accounts for 29.6% of variance.

Hill et al. (2018) discuss approaches that some families from diverse cultural and ethnic upbringings use to inspire their children to do well in education. Some ethnic minority families use stories about forfeiting their education to bring up a family with some families going as far as exposing their children to manual labour in order to learn the value of education. It is possible that the extrinsic motivation experienced by students in these situations is what Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 62) term 'introjected regulation'. This is defined as a type of extrinsic motivation which could be considered controlling, as people with introjected regulation perform tasks with a feeling of pressure in order to avoid guilt or culpability.

Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that exerting pressure through guilt could be considered as a 'controlling' parenting method which could have a negative impact on a child's motivation to learn. They state that parents who adopt a more autonomy supportive approach are more likely to raise children who would be motivated to freely explore and extend their learning beyond the classroom. Parents who are more controlling of their children could potentially stifle their child's motivation. This could be through loss of initiative and an ability to learn well, particularly in situations where the tasks are more complex and require higher-level thought processing.

This was indicated by one parental interview where the parent (female, Asian Indian) wanted nothing less than Grade 9 from her daughter in modern foreign languages. It is well-documented that Asian parents tend to have higher academic expectations than those from other racial

groups (Glick & White, 2004; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007; Vartanian et al., 2007).

> "[And] she's very talented, intelligent, academic. She's come from a place where in English and Maths, the SATs that they do in Y6 she was third in the school. She's only ever been in the top set and she's within the top 5 for Maths and Science and English within the whole 240-odd students that there are in her year. So she is very intelligent academically. She's sporty and creative as well, but she's very much an all-rounder, so I don't expect much less than a Grade 9, to be honest". (Female parent, Asian Indian, School C)

The language that the parent used appeared affirmative and it was clear that she had extremely high expectations of her child. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), this could lead to two possible outcomes: the child achieves well in GCSE examinations or s/he may become overwhelmed with pressure to reach his/her parents' expectations as the work becomes more academically challenging, resulting in demotivation and loss of ability to learn well. As individuals require a level of prompting to complete extrinsically motivated activities, one possible reason for the completion of such activities could be to become valued by important figures that are connected to the individual such as a parent, a group of friends or a wider community. The other parents interviewed appeared to have a more relaxed approach to their child's education, using less affirmative and more open language such as being 'eager' for their child to experience language learning and wishing their child to 'aspire and achieve' without placing emphasis on grade outcomes or class settings (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

### 4.3 Further emergent themes from qualitative analysis

In addition to exploring the six motivation constructs during the interviews, it was clear that participants wished to raise other aspects of their experience

of foreign language learning. As the interviews progressed, other themes began to emerge which add a further layer of understanding and analysis to this study.

Table 27 lists the additional themes which emerged from the interviews and the number of times it was mentioned by child, parent or by inter-generational dyad. Frequency of mention has been added in order to give an indicative sense of salience, though caution must be exercised with regard to interpreting the numbers. In total, 18 themes were identified from the interview data, some of which were already discussed in previous sections in this chapter. It would be pertinent, however, to discuss other themes which could have a bearing on student and parent experiences and orientations towards modern foreign languages.

| Code | Total Number of comments |
|---|---|
| Parental experience of language learning | 11 |
| Parental Encouragement and Engagement | 16 |
| Student enjoyment of MFL | 10 |
| Intrinsic value of MFL (cognitive, cultural awareness) | 6 |
| Perceived usefulness – travel and tourism | 19 |
| Perceived usefulness – career progression | 30 |
| Perceived difficulty of learning a MFL | 26 |
| Options and timetabling restrictions | 32 |
| Teaching approach in MFL lessons | 20 |
| Impact of Brexit | 5 |

*Table 27 Additional emergent themes from semi-structured interviews*

For example, language choices and options were mentioned a number of times during the interviews, with parents expressing more negative views than their children. Of the parents interviewed, those who mentioned language options and choices stated that the flexibility and range of languages on offer in schools did not afford as many opportunities to experience different languages other than French, German or Spanish. They also stated that, if students were given the opportunity to choose another

language, perhaps without previous study, there could be a possibility that the student would be more motivated due to the fresh, new challenges of learning a completely different language.

This finding echoes Parrish and Taylor (2014) and Parrish and Lanvers (2019) who found that parents were more critical of the languages on offer at schools, stating that a wider choice of languages may encourage learners to try something new and different. Students, on the other hand, were largely indifferent; however, when they were interviewed with parents, there were marginally more positive comments than negative made about language options and choices. This was due to the fact that parents stated that they were happy if their child was happy.

The theme that emerged as one of the most salient was the perceived difficulty of learning a language, as mentioned in the section on sense of achievement. The majority of the comments that mentioned the perceived difficulty were negative which could impact undesirably on a student's motivation. This is related to Weiner's (1985) theory of attribution where task difficulty is considered external to an individual, and therefore not easily self-regulated. Interestingly, the theme with the most positive comments appeared to be the perceived usefulness of a language qualification with students and parents almost reaching a consensus. This creates a paradox; students and parents perceive that a language qualification is useful; however, the difficulty of the subject often discourages individuals from studying one. This finding, again, echoes Parrish and Lanvers (2019) who found that parents commented favourably on the usefulness of a language qualification but were far from favourable in their views when discussing the perceived difficulty of the subject. Consequently, the status of MFL in schools is looked upon negatively by parents, as echoed by the interview data, during which the majority of comments regarding the status of MFL were negative.

Interestingly, the present study was conducted during the aftermath of the 2016 referendum on Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit); however, there was little or no mention in the interviews of the impact of Brexit on the future of foreign language learning. Those parents who did mention it were negative towards Brexit and stated that it would be closing doors for students who would like to travel or pursue a career overseas. This finding aligns with Lanvers, Dougherty and Thompson (2018) who postulate that the discourse surrounding the referendum is adding to an already dire situation concerning language learning in the UK and its impact on the UK labour market. A possible explanation for the lack of mention of Brexit could be that parents may have wished to refrain from revealing their political allegiances; however, it would have been interesting to see if their viewpoint on Brexit may have influenced their thoughts on foreign language learning.

Closer analysis of the comments made during the interviews revealed that, whilst parents made more positive comments than the students, they were considerably more critical of certain aspects of language learning, notably the perceived difficulty of the subject and language options available to their children. Interestingly, it is clear from the table that comments made during the dyad interviews were more balanced in terms of positive and negative comments. It is also interesting to note that more neutral comments were made during the dyad interviews. This finding could indicate the prevalence of non-committal views when the parent and child are interviewed together. Table 28 shows a summary of the number of positive, negative or neutral comments from participants.

| | Positive | Negative | Neutral |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students | 41 | 15 | 7 |
| Parents | 48 | 30 | 5 |
| Dyads | 26 | 24 | 16 |

*Table 28 Summary statistics of positive, negative and neutral comments*

The qualitative data has complemented the quantitative findings by enabling more complex thoughts and experiences to be brought to the fore and by revealing further themes which articulate differently with the six motivation constructs presented earlier in this chapter.

## 4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings of a small-scale exploratory investigation along with an analytical discussion. Both quantitative and qualitative data were presented thematically, drawing on key ideas from the research literature, in order to offer a multi-dimensional view of the relationships between parent and child orientations towards modern foreign language learning. Furthermore, the findings were also considered in relation to the three key theories of attribution, self-determination and cultural capital that have underpinned this study. The outcomes of the present study align closely with existing studies relating to motivation and foreign language education, particularly with respect to the multi-faceted choices that face children in Year 8. However, the data collected from parents could help to provide a further layer of understanding of how parental involvement in the foreign language learning process can potentially affect the motivation of their children.

The following chapter will re-frame the data and discussion presented in light of the research questions that guided this study and will offer recommendations. Additionally, it will reflect on and discuss the present study's key conclusions and highlight its contribution to knowledge in the field of motivation and foreign language learning; alongside reflecting on the study's limitations. Suggestions will also be put forward for how this study could be used to inform future classroom practitioners on initial teacher education courses. Finally, proposals for future research within the field of modern foreign language education and motivation will be made in light of the outcome of this study.

# Chapter 5 Conclusions and Implications

## 5.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the data collected using the sequential mixed-methods research design in terms of the research questions which guided this study. The exploratory research design for the present study has addressed the need for more mixed-methods studies in the field of foreign language learning and motivation, as called for by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011). The substantive contribution that the present study has made to the field will be presented and the chapter will conclude with a discussion of possible implications for policy and practice along with recommendations for further research.

## 5.2 Addressing the research questions

### 5.2.1 RQ1 – How can the orientations of Year 8 secondary school students (in selected urban secondary schools) towards learning MFL be described?

This research question set out to describe the orientations of a sample of Year 8 students in West Midlands schools towards learning a modern foreign language. The study has shown that, generally speaking, most students in the present sample were not highly motivated by studying MFL, with a large proportion of students reporting that the subject is difficult and that they see little relevance of the subject beyond the classroom.

A large percentage of the students also reported that they do not prioritise their language learning homework over other subjects. They are cognisant, however, that with more effort, they are able to make better progress. This study indicates that many students feel in control of their language learning and that it is their responsibility to do well in the language. There was,

however, a small minority of respondents who disagreed with the corresponding questionnaire statement relating to responsibility.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that of the relatively low level of students' intrinsic motivation - a large percentage (60.2%) reported that they are not interested in learning a foreign language. They also report having little or no interest in engaging with different media such as books, magazines, newspapers or films in the target language. Interestingly, almost half (48.4%) of the students indicated that they would be happy to live in the target language country. In terms of extrinsic motivation, 60.2% of students agree that they only study MFL as it is a requirement of the school which could be an indication that this proportion of students would consider discontinuing their language study when made optional.

Interview participants were vocal in expressing disagreement with the options pathways presented to students and those in state schools reported that options were too narrow and that most students do not have a choice. Those that do, can only choose from limited language options, with some students only having one language to choose. Student interviewees from independent schools reported having greater choice with languages such as Mandarin, Arabic and Japanese being offered as timetabled lessons as well as native speakers of, for example, Urdu, being able to take a language qualification in their mother tongue.

A noteworthy point is the influence of parents (mainly mothers) over options choices. One student reported that his choice of language for GCSE would be guided by the language learning experiences of his mother who gained a GCSE in French. Her son chose French as he felt that his mother would be able to support him through the GCSE and with homework. Overall, students offered negative comments on the options process, particularly the timetabling constraints that come with options pathways and subject

combinations which can have a considerable impact on students' options choices and orientations towards languages.

### 5.2.2 RQ2 – How can the orientations of these students' parents towards learning MFL be described?

Interestingly, the parents in the present sample also expressed similar thoughts on MFL learning to their children. Over half of the parents disagreed strongly with the statement regarding studying a MFL even if the school did not require it. A majority (71%) stated that they did not continue with their language learning beyond the requirements of the school.

A large proportion of parents also reported finding learning a foreign language difficult, with 44.9% of parents agreeing with this statement. A majority of parent respondents (50.5%) were happy overall with their grades and reported having a feeling of success from learning a language. Most (72.6%) also agreed that it was their responsibility to do well in MFL and 40.2% stated they felt in control of their language learning at school. Most parents (62.6%) reported that they did not engage with the target language outside of the classroom through reading and watching films in the language and just over half (56.1%) declared never being interested in learning a modern foreign language. Finally, around two thirds (64.5%) of parents reported having little encouragement from their parents and family to do well in a foreign language.

Parent interviewees were able to articulate the potential benefits of language learning such as enhancing job prospects and opening doors to other opportunities such as travelling or working abroad. Whilst some parents were cognisant of these benefits, these were tainted by the reputation that languages has as a difficult subject area in which to gain qualifications. Parents were also negative towards the options process with those from state schools being critical of the restrictions placed on students due to

timetabling and the availability of staffing to make different languages available on the curriculum. Interestingly, the impact of Brexit was seldom mentioned by parents, however those that did mention it did so negatively, stating that it closes doors to those wishing to work abroad in target language countries.

Overall, parents' orientations towards learning a foreign language were not overtly negative and some parents recognised the instrumental value of languages in terms of securing good job prospects and travelling abroad. In some cases, parent participants have returned to language learning through the use of mobile language learning applications.

### 5.2.3 RQ3 – What is the nature of any possible relationship between parent and student orientations towards MFL learning?

Correlation analysis showed that the questionnaire data for parents and students showed moderate to strong associations for five of the six motivation constructs. The strongest positive associations were for general motivation ($r$=0.824, p<0.01), intrinsic motivation ($r$=0.730, p<0.01), and extrinsic motivation ($r$=0.890, p<0.01). Internal attribution of achievement showed a moderate association ($r$=0.533, p<0.01) and sense of achievement in MFL showed a weak to moderate positive association ($r$=0.444, p<0.01). The external attribution of achievement in MFL showed no correlation.

Further inferential statistical analyses yielded noteworthy results when investigating the impact of parental independent variables on student motivation constructs. Linear regression showed that parental level of education (also taken as an indication of socio-economic status) had a statistically significant effect on student sense of achievement with 14.1% of the variance of student mean scores for this construct being accounted for by parental level of education. This independent variable also accounted for

statistically significant variance in student mean scores for intrinsic motivation (10.7%) and extrinsic motivation (10.8%). The linear regression analyses, therefore, showed parental level of education to be significant in explaining some of the variance in student responses for the motivation constructs sense of achievement, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Additionally, the parental level of language learning had statistically significant effects on student intrinsic motivation (15.8% variance) and similarly for extrinsic motivation (15.8% variance).

However, the parental independent variable which had the greatest effect on student extrinsic motivation was parental ethnicity (29.6% variance). There is a wealth of literature on ethnicity and academic outcomes, much of which states that some ethnic minority families place emphasis on learning and education to the extent of exerting pressure on their children. There could be a number of reasons for this; however, Hill et al. (2018), as discussed, speak of ethnic minority families, particularly Asian Indian, using stories of forfeiting education to raise a family, therefore the child feels that s/he should give something back to the family through good grades. My interview data reveals very little if anything with regards to cultural practices in families; however, it is clear from the data that parents have high expectations for their children to do well in MFL.

These parental data must be interpreted with caution due to the smaller sample size compared to the students. It would therefore be wise to avoid any generalisation of these data to the wider population of parents, however, they were statistically significant. Furthermore, the parental sample was not representative in terms of parental gender as more female parents participated than male parents, which aligns with the experience of Williams et al. (2002). Reay (2005) also states that female parents are more likely to play an active role in a child's schooling which resonates with this study as only mothers expressed a wish to participate.

## 5.3 Implications for policy and practice

### 5.3.1 Implications for teaching and learning

The interview data suggest that teaching approaches in MFL are key and could play a pivotal role in motivating students. Indeed, other research has highlighted that teachers play an undeniable role in ensuring that students do not become demotivated in their language learning and to avoid 'frustrating classroom activities' (Lamb, 2017, p. 329). Teachers need to be mindful of the activities that they are planning to ensure that they are engaging and accessible to the students in the class and any who present with specific difficulties could be accounted for and differentiated activities given to them. Meticulous planning and having a clear knowledge of students are elements of the government's Teacher Standards (2020) and should be upheld by *all* teachers; however, it cannot be ignored that some teachers may find this difficult when faced with increased pressures in the workplace.

Metacognition and an awareness of learning could also be considered essential to successful modern foreign language learning. Having a heightened awareness of how one learns could lead to greater independence and autonomy in language learning, something that is regarded as a key motivating factor by Lamb (2017). Student interviewees recalled recent school trips to target language countries where the majority of the communication was done by the teachers, therefore, limiting students' autonomy. Recognising the emotional, cognitive and social effects of language learning as contributing factors to success or failure could make students more aware of how their behaviours and thought processes impact on their academic outcomes. Lanvers, Hultgren and Gayton (2018) made some ground on this with their intervention and this area would warrant further study.

Student data in the current study showed that students reported being more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated in MFL. As well as teachers having a clear understanding of their students' needs, it is also vital for them to set appropriate targets and expectations. Target-setting involves giving students a target to reach by a certain time; however, if these targets are unrealistic, they could become a demotivating factor for students who feel that they would not be able to achieve it. Setting appropriate, realistic targets could play to students' extrinsic motivation if they are goal-orientated, which I have observed in my own practice. Goal- and target-orientated approaches are considered extrinsically motivating (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The present study has highlighted the need for students to become autonomous language learners, to encourage learners to seek self-satisfaction in completing tasks well and to provide greater opportunity for collaborative learning. The key to successful outcomes in modern foreign language learning is the sustained effort that is required over a long period of time. Classroom practitioners must impart a culture of persistence and perseverance in students is paramount in securing favourable outcomes in language learning. This goes hand in hand with the idea of metacognition where students build an understanding of how they learn and the processes through which they go when learning.

### 5.3.2 Implications for schools

The findings of this study indicate the need for schools to raise the profile of modern foreign languages. According to the student questionnaire data, languages as a subject area is not highly regarded. In order to overcome this, celebrating languages in the school such as the European Day of Languages in September and the national holidays of the target language countries could make a positive contribution to raising their profile. It could also be done by recognising the linguistic diversity of the school itself,

creating a 'Web of Languages' which displays all of the languages spoken by students and staff in school.

Questionnaire and interview data suggest that many of the participants were cognisant of the instrumental benefits of learning a foreign language for enhancing career prospects but do not recognise the other cognitive benefits. Language learning helps individuals with their verbal skills, communicating with others, memory and problem-solving skills; all of which could be considered transferable across other subjects in the curriculum. This could be further consolidated by inviting people to school careers fairs for whom languages play a significant role in their jobs. This could provide all-important context for students who find it difficult to see the relevance of foreign languages to the UK job market.

A significant argument that this present study has brought to the fore through engagement with interview participants is that of creating a meaningful and effective dialogue with parents on the importance and benefits of learning a foreign language. There was a clear socio-economic divide between the student participants who attended independent schools and those who attended state comprehensive schools, a divide that is well-documented. Whilst the literature states that some parents find it difficult to support their child's foreign language learning, it is still vitally important for parents to show an interest and where possible, support in other ways, for example purchasing resources such as dictionaries or online language learning platforms. Creating an environment at home conducive to language learning could have a positive impact on a child's experience of MFL learning whilst still feeling supported by their parents. Furthermore, emotional support from families could be considered crucial for ensuring that their child has a positive attitude to learning at school.

Finally, schools should reflect on how to implement a consistent whole-school policy on languages in order that modern foreign languages have a

clear position within the school curriculum. This includes allocating sufficient timetabled lessons, providing enough curriculum time across the Key Stages to cover the increased content required by GCSE and A level courses. Finally, to allow classroom practitioners to keep abreast of developments in MFL teaching pedagogy and examination board requirements, school leaders should ensure that provision has been made for MFL teachers and teaching assistants to attend continuous professional development courses and training in order to offer the very best quality teaching to students. This could ultimately lead to more favourable outcomes for students in MFL as well as instilling confidence in teachers of their capability and subject knowledge.

### 5.3.3 Implications for curriculum policy

Interview data suggest that students could respond more favourably to studying a language if greater choice was offered at the stage where students are required to choose their options for GCSE. Parents in particular commented negatively towards the options system often stating that it is limiting to their child's education and that more options may encourage their child to try something new. Timetabling restrictions and staffing different languages could pose significant difficulties for schools irrespective of their sector; however, where resources allow, schools could offer extra-curricular opportunities to engage with other languages such as lunchtime and after-school clubs if timetabling does not allow this.

Parents who do not feel equipped to support their child's language learning could be better supported by schools through sharing course information with parents. Clear content and information on the schemes of work and assessment requirements could be made available so that parents are aware of how best to support their child, particularly during assessment periods where heightened stress levels and pressure could result in poor outcomes. This refers back to the emotional support of families even when parents feel unable to support with the content of the subject. Ofsted guidelines require

inspectors to look at how effective schools are at helping parents to understand the curriculum and the teaching that it provides to their children. This is clearly stated in the Inspection Framework (DfE, 2019) that schools and leaders should 'engage effectively with learners and others in their community including, where relevant, parents [...]'. A clear, transparent explanation of the school curriculum, course content and teaching, shared with the relevant stakeholders, could make some headway in improving this dialogue.

The present study highlighted the wish for a wider selection of languages to be made available for study in schools. This could, of course, carry staffing implications; however, it was mentioned by participants that offering a wider selection of languages could mean that students pick a language due to their intrinsic desire to learn it, therefore leading to a positive attitude towards that language. The current recruitment landscape of language specialists continues to be an issue due to the number of UK universities closing languages departments, painting a bleak picture of the language learning landscape in higher education. Some universities have chosen to withdraw funding to languages courses that do not reach sufficient student numbers to make courses viable. This also leads to ceasing any promotion of language courses, possibly adding to the already declining image of foreign languages.

A further consideration could be the provision for more overseas excursions to countries where the target language is spoken. This could help with contextualising the learning taking place in the classroom by providing students with the opportunity to see the language used in real-life situations. In turn, this affords students the opportunity to practise their communication and verbal skills in the language, thus putting themselves on the route to becoming an autonomous learner. Schools that receive government funding for students from lower income families could consider using this funding effectively by allowing students to build their own cultural capital through

exposure to cultural activities such as overseas trips as opposed to focusing purely on academic outcomes and school league tables. This value-added approach could help the student to become more aware of the world around them and instill an understanding of and respect for other cultures.

### 5.3.4 Implications for wider society

Without the backing of a society that values languages, the status of languages in schools will always be questionable. Active involvement from high profile individuals in society is indispensable if languages are to be given the high social status needed to convince the young people of today of their value and importance. This could be through engagement with social media as many young people are active users of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat. Influential figures who use these platforms could play a key role in promoting the importance and usefulness of languages. Businesses could also be more involved by placing greater value on foreign language skills within the UK labour market, particularly given that we are no longer part of the European Union. Students with language learning experience and qualifications should be considered a valuable resource to UK businesses post-Brexit.

### 5.3.5 Implications for theory

The present study has contributed to current knowledge on motivation towards foreign language learning from two key perspectives: children *and* parents. A definition of parental involvement was attempted in Chapter 2 because the literature offered different operationalisations of parental engagement in the education process. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, a definition was formulated drawing on commonalities across key studies. This was also necessary when considering the role of cultural capital, as there is no widely accepted definition of this offered by Bourdieu or his proponents. In light of the findings of the present study, parental

engagement in the education process was broadly defined as supporting children *emotionally* as well as academically through their school lives. The extent of this engagement is subject to external influences such as socio-economic factors, family pressures, cultural influences and work-related reasons which align closely to the multi-faceted nature of the critical realist perspective adopted for this study. Students were also subject to similar socio-economic, cultural and educational influences, all of which shape how they engage with society and reality in general.

Schools will now be assessed as part of the new 2019 Ofsted Framework on their effectiveness at developing children's cultural capital. This could pose challenges for schools and policymakers who will be responsible for measuring this effectiveness. Attempts to quantify cultural capital have resulted in a reductionist view, reducing it to visits to the theatre or participating in art classes. This could prove problematic as Bourdieu's theory is more complex than attendance at cultural activities, therefore it will be necessary for Ofsted to have a clear understanding of the forms of cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutionalised) and how they intend to measure the school's effectiveness in nurturing it.

## 5.4 Contribution to knowledge

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) called for more mixed-methods research to be conducted within the field of motivation and foreign language learning, a call which this study addresses by employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods and analyses. The mixed-methods approach adopted by the present study has afforded multiple layers of analysis thus viewing the investigation from different perspectives. Furthermore, Jones (2009) called for a specific research focus on parents in order to see if there was a correlation between parents' views and those of their children and how this affects their engagement in the subject. By shifting the focus from students to parents and by employing correlational analyses, the present study makes some progress towards answering Jones' call. This continues to be an area

that is under-researched, meaning this doctoral study makes a valuable contribution to knowledge in the areas of foreign language education and the psychology of language learning in particular, with important implications for all stakeholders in education.

The inclusion of three key theories (Figure 6) afforded the opportunity to explore the nature of motivation in foreign language learning from different perspectives.

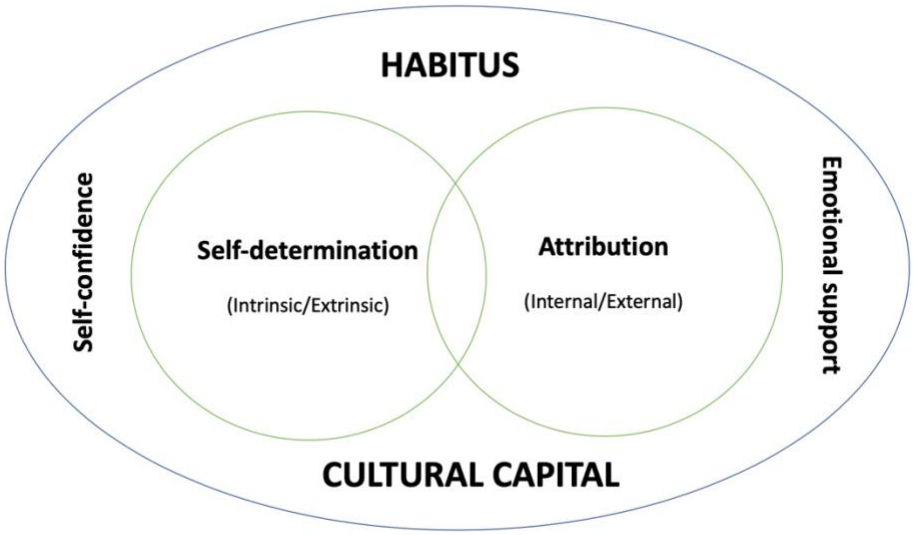



*Figure 6 Theoretical model for the present study*

Self-determination and Attribution are intrinsically linked as I discussed in Chapter 2. These are encapsulated within a person's habitus which dictates their disposition towards a given activity, in the case of this study, foreign language study. Self-confidence is two-fold: in parents to support their child and in the child themselves given the perceived difficulty of language study. Parents who feel unable to support linguistically may compensate by emotional support, all of which is included in the wider definition of cultural capital and habitus.

As discussed on page 23, Ryan and Deci's (2000) 'Self-Determination continuum' includes an attribution dimension by referring to an individual's

locus of control as shown in figure 1. This study takes this existing relationship further by also drawing on Weiner's (1985) 'Causal Structure' to explore in greater detail the participants' attribution of achievement in MFL learning. Cultural capital and habitus are vital in providing a child with the necessary resources and skills to negotiate their way through the education system. The inclusion of habitus and cultural capital theory in the present study helped to highlight the role that parents play in transmitting their educational values and beliefs to their children. This heuristic, conceptual model could form the basis of future studies which explore motivation in other curriculum subjects such as mathematics or the sciences.

As classroom practitioners, it is important to have a greater awareness of possible influences on a student's motivation. The conceptual framework used in the present study provides the researcher with a lens through which to explore language learning motivation that recognises external variables which could have a potential impact. By incorporating Bourdieu's theory of capital and habitus, a unique and valuable perspective is provided on how educational values and beliefs are transmitted from parent to child, with a particular focus on dispositions towards language learning; an area of the field that is seldom researched. Previous research has attempted to capture this through student perceptions of parental involvement, however, students are potentially less reliable narrators of their parents' experiences of language learning. The current study is unique in that it presents these experiences through first-hand accounts from parents rather than students' perceptions which may not capture a true account.

The new insights offered by this study show that parents can have a direct influence on the language chosen by a student based on their own language learning experiences and that parents believe that more language options should be available to students. The correlational analyses have shown a clear strong association between parent and student motivation and this was also present in the dyadic interviews during which the parent-child dynamic

clearly changed with students being more cautious of their responses and having a tendency to align closely with their parents' views. Applying a dyadic approach to the semi-structured interviews afforded a unique insight into the power dynamic between the parent and their child, a technique which has not been used in previous research.

## 5.5 Suggestions for further research

Whilst this study draws on parent and child motivation in MFL learning, it would be interesting to gather teacher perceptions of their students' motivation over time, particularly within the period identified as between Year 7 and Year 9 (11-13 years old). This would add a further dimension of analysis to the present study which could be approached from a more pedagogical perspective. A suggested focus could be the use of summative assessment data in identifying trends in outcomes as students progress through Key Stage 3.

This study has tentatively identified a strong relationship between parent and student orientations towards foreign language learning. It would be interesting to conduct an action research study whereby parents are invited into school on a number of occasions in order to receive input on how to support their child(ren) with their language learning. Assessment data of the students whose parents participated in the intervention could be examined to see if any changes have taken place and to make comparisons with those who did not participate.

## 5.6 Reflections on current study

Conducting this study was, at times, challenging given the nature of the research and the number of schools that participated. As I currently work in an independent school, terms are shorter and holiday times are slightly extended compared to state sector schools. This afforded me more time to

work on the analysis of the data as well as write up the thesis. The research that has been undertaken has been enlightening and rewarding both personally and professionally. Links have been forged with the participant schools and a summary report of the findings from this study will be shared with the Headteachers and Boards of Trustees.

The questionnaire response rate from schools was higher than expected; however, the generalisability of the results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, there is an inequality in the number of student and parent participants, the reasons for which were voiced when the schools were approached to participate and were discussed in an earlier section. Additionally, the number of parents willing to be interviewed was low, a limitation which was beyond my control. Further recruitment of parent participants took place but to no avail, regardless of the flexibility offered of interviewing online.

When compiling the questionnaire statements, it became apparent that it was necessary to have a balance of positive and negative statements to mitigate bias from only having positive statements. The role of the community of practice was invaluable in allowing me to share and request feedback from other education professionals on my proposed questionnaire. It could have been fruitful to offer open-ended questions in the questionnaire to allow participants to write their thoughts and opinions more freely rather than responding purely to Likert-scale statements. This could have added additional data and a further layer of analysis before embarking on the semi-structured interviews.

It is without doubt that a larger number of interview participants would have yielded richer qualitative data; however, it was necessary to rely on parents' goodwill to participate and to give up their own time. A possible suggestion to increase participation could be to offer incentives but this could turn out to be a costly exercise. Furthermore, no male parents were interviewed;

therefore it would have been better to recruit a more gender-balanced sample for the interview stage of the study in order to provide a better representative sample.

## 5.7 Chapter summary

In this exploratory study, I have investigated the orientations of both parents and their children towards modern foreign language learning within the broader field of foreign language acquisition and motivation. My study helps to shift the focus of prior research in this field from solely students' perspectives on motivation to include parental orientations, which has been less explored in previous studies and this adds a valuable new perspective of an on-going issue in English secondary schools. It is hoped that this small-scale, mixed-methods study drawing on multiple perspectives makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of research within the field of foreign language learning.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1.Participation request email to school contacts

Dear Mr XXXX,

My name is Chris Martin and I am a doctoral research student at the University of Wolverhampton. I am also Head of French in an independent school in Edgbaston.

I am writing to ask if your school would be willing to participate in my research study investigating the attitudes of parents towards learning a foreign language and how this impacts on their child's attitudes to learn a MFL. I have attached an overview of my proposed research and what would be involved. I am in the process of applying for ethical approval which would entail upholding the school's anonymity, the right to withdraw from participating and the right to access the project findings.

If you agree to participate, I would require official confirmation from the school which will be passed on to the ethics committee and my supervisors at the university. If you would like to chat about this project in greater detail, I would be more than happy to speak via telephone or Skype, or indeed via email.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information and I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you in advance.

Regards,

**Mr Chris Martin BA(Hons) PGCE MA(Open)**
Doctoral Researcher
University of Wolverhampton
Gorway Road
Walsall

**Appendix 2. Ethical Approval signed by the Faculty Ethics Committee**

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

## Section 4

**CONFIRMATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL AND FEEDBACK ON SUBMISSION**

## TO BE COMPLETED AS INDICATED, BY MODULE LEADER, SUPERVISOR AND/OR HEAD OF ETHICS PANEL

### CATEGORY A PROPOSALS:

*I confirm that the proposal for research being made by the above student/member of staff is a category A proposal and that s/he may now continue with the proposed research activity:*

| | |
|---|---|
| For a student's proposal – Name of module leader or supervisor giving approval | |
| For a member of staff's proposal – name of Head of Ethics panel giving approval | [redacted] |
| Signed | [redacted] |
| Date | 18/07/2018. |

## Appendix 3.Participant Information Sheet

### Modern Foreign Language Learning: The impact of parental attitudes on student motivation.

***Researcher: Christopher Martin, Doctoral Researcher, Institute of Education, University of Wolverhampton and Subject Leader of French, St George's School Edgbaston.***

### Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends/relatives. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the possible impact of parents' attitudes to learning a foreign language on their child's motivation to learn a modern foreign language in secondary school. The rationale for this study comes from my own experience of discussing the importance of learning a foreign language with parents during parent-teacher meetings.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been identified as a suitable participant as you have a child in Year 8 who studies a modern foreign language in secondary school. You will be participating in this study along with other parents of children in Year 8 in three secondary schools across the West Midlands.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you may keep this information sheet and will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**What will happen if I decide to take part?**

The study will have two stages; a questionnaire to parents and children, and then short interviews with selected parents and their children. You will be asked to

provide contact details (email address or mobile number) should you consent to being interviewed. If selected for an interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences and thoughts in relation to learning a foreign language. The interview will be recorded with your permission which will allow me to revisit your responses in my analysis. I would ask that you are honest and answer the questions in the questionnaire and the interview (if selected) from your own point of view. The amount of time to complete the questionnaire will be less than 10 minutes and the interview will last around one hour.

The questionnaire will be given out first to children during their modern foreign languages lessons. Your questionnaire will be given to your child. I request that you return your questionnaire to the school via your child and it will be collected by me.

**What are the potential benefits and risks of taking part?**

Though there are no direct benefits for you if you take part, by taking part you will help us to find out about the ways in which parents' attitudes towards learning a language may be related to those of their children. This may improve the dialogue between schools, parents and policymakers in the future on the importance for children to have a solid foundation in modern foreign languages. Parents may also be interested in the subject of the research and may enjoy the opportunity to discuss their experiences with the researcher.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. All the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The transcription of the interview you participate in/the surveys you completed will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office. Only myself and my project supervisors working on the project will have access to the data. You will not be identifiable in any publication or report as the data will be grouped together and all identifying information will be removed. Anonymity of all participants will also be upheld throughout the data collection stages.

**What will happen at the end of the research study?**

When the study is complete, I will send you a summary of the findings if you request this on your questionnaire. The results of the project will form the basis of a doctoral thesis and will potentially be published in academic journals. You may request copies of these publications from me at [redacted].

**What if I have problem whilst taking part in the study?**

If you have a problem, please address this to myself via email in the first instance and I will endeavour to answer any queries or concerns you may have. You may also contact my research supervisors via email: Dr Brendan Bartram [redacted] and Dr Lydia Lewis [redacted].

**Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has been reviewed by two doctoral supervisors as well as the Research Ethics Committee for the Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing at the University of Wolverhampton. It received a favourable review by the committee on 19th July 2018.

**Contact for further information**

For further information on the study, please contact Mr Chris Martin at [redacted]

Should you wish to make a complaint, please address this to:

Prof. Michael Jopling (Director of Research, Institute of Education): [redacted]

Dr Brendan Bartram (Director of Studies): [redacted]

## Appendix 4.Final student and parent questionnaires

(Student version)

# Language Learning Experiences

Hello! My name is Mr Martin and I am a university student at the University of Wolverhampton. I am researching your attitudes to learning a foreign language in secondary school. I would really like you to participate in this short questionnaire. Your information will be stored securely, and your identity will remain anonymous. The questionnaire is about **YOUR** experience of learning a language at school so please answer the questionnaire as honestly as possible *from your own point of view*. Your parents will be asked permission for you to take part in my study.

***Thank you for taking part!***

**Please complete the following information by ticking the correct box:**

**Are you**: Male [ ] Female [ ] Prefer not to say [ ]

**Language(s) studied**: _____

**Language(s) spoken at home**: _____

**Please give your opinion to each of the following sentences by putting a circle around '1' really disagree, '2' disagree, '3' I don't know, '4' agree or '5' really agree.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Example: I don't like listening to French** | | **(1) 2 3 4 5** |
| 1. | I always pay attention in my language lessons. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. | I often take part in extra-curricular activities related to languages. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. | I am never hardworking in my language lessons. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. | I often think about how I could learn a foreign language better. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. | I plan my evening so that I have time to study the language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. | I spend more time on languages homework than other subjects. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. | I always have the feeling of being forced to study a foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. | I would study a language even if the school doesn't require it. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. | I will continue to learn the language after I finish school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | I always want to learn the foreign language well. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. | I find learning the foreign language difficult. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | I always want to be better at the language than my classmates. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | I am happy with my grades I have for languages. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | Learning a foreign language gives me a feeling of success. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. | I have good ability in learning a foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. | If I make greater effort, I could be good at foreign languages. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. | If I do badly in my languages tests, I usually know how to improve for next time. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. | How I do in languages is not a matter of luck. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. | I feel in control of my language learning. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 20. | It is my own responsibility to do well in the foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. | I am never interested in learning a foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. | I like reading foreign language newspapers, magazines or books. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. | I like watching films in the foreign language that I learn. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. | I enjoy meeting and talking to others in the foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. | I enjoy using the foreign language wherever possible. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26. | I feel comfortable when I have to speak the foreign language that I learn in front of others. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27. | I would like to live where they speak the language that I learn. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. | I am interested in the lifestyle and culture of the country whose language I learn at school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29. | I study a language because school requires me to. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30. | I study a foreign language to help with finding a better job in the future. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 31. | I study French/German/Spanish/_____ because it is an international language. (Please delete/complete as appropriate) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 32. | My parents or other family members expect me to study a foreign language well. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 33. | I think that people will respect me more for learning a foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 34. | I study a foreign language to make myself look good. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 35. | I think studying a language is a sign of an educated person. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 36. | I study another language because it helps with other academic subjects. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

If you are willing to be interviewed to discuss more about your language learning experiences, please tick the box ☑ and write your name below. ☐

**Name:** _____

## Thank you for taking part!

**(Parent Version)**

## Language Learning Experiences

My name is Chris Martin and I am a doctoral researcher at the University of Wolverhampton. I am conducting research into parental attitudes to learning a foreign language in secondary school. I would appreciate your time in participating by completing this short questionnaire. Your information will be stored securely, and your identity will remain anonymous. The questionnaire is about **YOUR** experience of learning a language at school and **NOT** your child(ren) so please answer the questionnaire as honestly as possible *from your own point of view*. Your completion of this questionnaire will be taken as consent to participate in the study.

***Many thanks for your participation.***

**Please state your opinion to each of the following statements by circling '1' strongly disagree, '2' disagree, '3' undecided, '4' agree or '5' strongly agree.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | I always paid attention in my language lessons. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. | I often took part in extra-curricular activities related to languages. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. | I was always hardworking in my language lessons. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. | I often thought about how I could learn a foreign language better. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. | I used to plan my evening so that I had time to study the language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. | I used to spend more time on languages homework than other subjects. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. | I always had the feeling of being forced to study a foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. | I would have studied a language even if the school didn't require it. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. | I continued to learn the language after I had finished school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | I always wanted to learn the foreign language well. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. | I found learning the foreign language difficult. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | I always wanted to be better at the language than my classmates. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | I was happy with my grade I achieved for languages. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | Learning a foreign language gave me a feeling of success. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. | I had good ability in learning a foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. | If I made greater effort, I could have been good at the language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. | If I did badly in my languages tests, I usually knew how to improve for next time. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. | How I did in languages was not a matter of luck. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. | I felt in control of my language learning. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. | It was my own responsibility to do well in the foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. | I was never interested in learning a foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. | I like reading foreign language newspapers, magazines or books. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. | I like watching films in the foreign language that I learnt. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. | I enjoy meeting and talking to others in the foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. | I enjoy using the foreign language wherever possible. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26. | I feel comfortable when I have to speak the foreign language that I learnt in front of others. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27. | I would like to live where they speak the language that I learnt. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

(Highlighted statement – reverse-coded)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **28.** | I am interested in the lifestyle and culture of the country whose language I learnt at school. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **29.** | I studied English to fulfil a university language requirement. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **30.** | I studied a foreign language to help with finding a better job in the future. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **31.** | I studied French/German/Spanish because it is an international language. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **32.** | My parents or other family members expected me to study a foreign language well. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **33.** | I thought that people would respect me more for learning a foreign language. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **34.** | I studied a foreign language to add to my social status. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **35.** | I think studying a language is a sign of an educated person. | **1 2 3 4 5** |
| **36.** | I studied another language because it helped with other academic subjects. | **1 2 3 4 5** |

**Many thanks for your participation.**

**Should you require any further information about the study, please emai[redacted]**

**If you consent to being contacted to discuss your experiences of language learning and those of your child, please leave your contact details below. You have the right to withdraw if you provide your details and then change your mind. Your contact information will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name:** | |
| **Contact information:** | |
| **Convenient time:** | |

Appendix 5. Example of completed student questionnaire

# Language Learning Experiences

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Hello! My name is Mr Martin and I am a university student at the University of Wolverhampton. I am researching your attitudes to learning a foreign language in secondary school. I would really like you to participate in this short questionnaire. Your information will be stored securely, and your identity will remain anonymous. The questionnaire is about **YOUR** experience of learning a language at school so please answer the questionnaire as honestly as possible *from your own point of view.* Your parents will be asked permission for you to take part in my study.

***Thank you for taking part!***

**Please complete the following information by ticking the correct box:**

**Are you:** Male / Female / Prefer not to say [ ] [ ] [ ]

**Language(s) studied:** French

**Language(s) spoken at home:** Urdu, Mirpuri, Punjabi, English

**Please give your opinion to each of the following sentences by putting a circle around '1' really disagree, '2' disagree, '3' I don't know, '4' agree or '5' really agree.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Example:** | **I don't like listening to French** | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 1. | I always pay attention in my language lessons. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 2. | I often take part in extra-curricular activities related to languages. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 3. | I am never hardworking in my language lessons. | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. | I often think about how I could learn a foreign language better. | 1 (2) 3 4 5 |
| 5. | I plan my evening so that I have time to study the language. | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. | I spend more time on languages homework than other subjects. | 1 (2) 3 4 5 |
| 7. | I always have the feeling of being forced to study a foreign language. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 8. | I would study a language even if the school doesn't require it. | 1 (2) 3 4 5 |
| 9. | I will continue to learn the language after I finish school. | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | I always want to learn the foreign language well. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 11. | I find learning the foreign language difficult. | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | I always want to be better at the language than my classmates. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 13. | I am happy with my grades I have for languages. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 14. | Learning a foreign language gives me a feeling of success. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 15. | I have good ability in learning a foreign language. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 16. | If I make greater effort, I could be good at foreign languages. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 17. | If I do badly in my languages tests, I usually know how to improve for next time. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 18. | How I do in languages is not a matter of luck. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 19. | I feel in control of my language learning. | 1 2 (3) 4 5 |

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| 20. | It is my own responsibility to do well in the foreign language. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 21. | I am never interested in learning a foreign language. | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. | I like reading foreign language newspapers, magazines or books. | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. | I like watching films in the foreign language that I learn. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 24. | I enjoy meeting and talking to others in the foreign language. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 25. | I enjoy using the foreign language wherever possible. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 26. | I feel comfortable when I have to speak the foreign language that I learn in front of others. | 1 2 (3) 4 5 |
| 27. | I would like to live where they speak the language that I learn. | (1) 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. | I am interested in the lifestyle and culture of the country whose language I learn at school. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 29. | I study a language because school requires me to. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 30. | I study a foreign language to help with finding a better job in the future. | 1 2 (3) 4 5 |
| 31. | I study French/German/Spanish/_french_ because it is an international language. (Please delete/complete as appropriate) | 1 2 (3) 4 5 |
| 32. | My parents or other family members expect me to study a foreign language well. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 33. | I think that people will respect me more for learning a foreign language. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 34. | I study a foreign language to make myself look good. | 1 2 3 4 (5) |
| 35. | I think studying a language is a sign of an educated person. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |
| 36. | I study another language because it helps with other academic subjects. | 1 2 3 (4) 5 |

If you are willing to be interviewed to discuss more about your language learning experiences, please tick the box ☑ and write your name below. ☑

**Name:** _____

## Thank you for taking part!

**Appendix 6.Final Interview Schedule**

## Modern Foreign Language Learning: Exploring the impact of parental orientations on student motivation

**Purpose**: To investigate the attitudes of Year 8 school students and their parents towards learning a foreign language. The information gathered will be used in conjunction with quantitative data from the questionnaires administered to parents and students to add a further dimension to the research.

**Anonymity and confidentiality**: The interview will be audio-recorded. All information provided will be treated as confidential and with anonymity (no names or identifying features will be used in the reporting).

**Follow-up**: Please let me know if you'd like to receive a summary of the research findings, once the project is complete.

**Interview Format:** 20 minutes (Parent); 20 minutes (Child); 20 minutes (together)

**Do you have any questions before we begin? (Both)**

**Questions:**

***(Parent)***

1. Can you tell me about your own experience of learning foreign languages at school?
2. Would you describe your general learning experience at school as positive or negative? What was this largely down to? What did you think of MFL? Was it a strong subject for you?
3. Did you enjoy learning a language at school? Why/why not?
4. Did you go abroad often on family holidays? Did you ever visit countries where French/German/Spanish was spoken? What do you think of France/Spain?
5. Did you ever go on school trips abroad? Did you enjoy them? Were they beneficial in any ways? If so, what ways?
6. Do you think your views on foreign language learning have changed? If so, how? What do you think influences these changes?
7. If you were given the opportunity, would you consider learning a foreign language now? Why?
8. Do you think [child's name] experience of learning languages at school has been different from your own? If so, in what ways?

9. What does [child's name] think of learning a foreign language? How do you think their views compare to your own? Do you feel you have influenced them at all? If so, in what ways?
10. Do you believe that languages should have the same status as English, Maths and Science at school? If so, why/why not?
11. Where do you see the future of foreign language learning heading?

**Is there anything else you would like to add on these issues?**

***Thank the parent(s). Ask him/her to introduce their child and remind them of the next stage of the interview process.***
***(Child)***

1. Can you tell me about your experience of learning a language/languages at school so far?
2. Can you describe your language lessons to me? What types of activities do you do? Do they help you with developing your understanding of French/German/Spanish? [make reference to attitudes during discussion]
3. Do you enjoy your language lessons? What do you think of MFL as a subject? What influences your views?
4. How would you describe your behaviour and the behaviour of others in your lessons? Is the behaviour in your languages lessons any different from other lessons? Why do you think this is the case?
5. Do you go abroad with your family? Do you ever visit countries where French/German/Spanish are spoken? What do you think of France/Spain/Germany?
6. Have you been on any school trips abroad? Did you enjoy them? Did you find it useful in any way? If so, in what ways?
7. If you were given the opportunity to choose, would you continue learning a language or would you consider 'dropping' it? Why?
8. What do your parents think of language learning? Do your parents share the same views as you? Do you think your parents influence your language learning in any way? If so, how?

**Anything else you would like to add to these issues?**

***(Both)***

1. Which one of you has the most positive views on language learning? Why? How important do you think language learning is? Should MFL be made a compulsory subject at GCSE level? Why? Why not?
2. What skills, other than linguistic ones, do you think are gained from language lessons? How important are these skills, in your opinion?
3. What are your thoughts on the decline in number of students wishing to continue language learning at GCSE level and beyond? Why do you think lots of students choose NOT to continue with language learning?

4. What do you think about the languages currently on offer in school? Would you prefer [child's name] to learn a different language if the opportunity arose?
5. [To the child] Do you think you will choose a language for one of your GCSE options?/Are you looking forward to starting your language GCSE in September? (Only ask if languages compulsory).

***Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?***
**Thank you for your participation. Would you like to review your transcript/receive a summary of the research findings?**

## Appendix 7. Example Interview Transcript (Dyad 2 – Independent School)

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| Chris Martin (R) | Thank you very much for joining me this afternoon, I do appreciate it. So first of all can you tell me about your own experience of learning a language? |
| Mrs M (MM) | I didn't do any languages at primary school at all, then we moved to the Yorkshire Dales when I was 11 and it was a sort of country school and we did Spanish and French, which I did through to GCSE. |
| R | So you did two languages? |
| MM | Yes. |
| R | Excellent, great. |
| MM | Those were the only two languages on offer then, they didn't do German or anything. |
| R | Right. How was your experience at that? Did you have a positive or a negative experience of it? |
| MM | It was generally positive but I still remember them saying Sarah is not a natural linguist in my school report, which I thought was not really very encouraging. The French teacher shouted quite a lot, so he was quite a volcanic man, shall I say! He was an exceptional teacher and obviously very gifted with the languages himself, but he didn't have a lot of patience with those who might find it more challenging. But having said that, I did study 2 languages to GCSE and then went on and did Spanish to A Level, but I most enjoyed the Spanish literature element in A Level rather than the Spanish language element. |
| R | Oh, so I'm guessing Spanish literature is quite a challenge really? |
| MM | I found that, I was doing English literature and I was really into the arts anyway, so I really enjoyed discovering Lorca and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. |
| R | Did you have a positive learning experience in general while you were at school? |
| MM | Yes, generally. Except that I was quite an academic child and I was in a country school where academics weren't really prized. So sport was prized more than academics, and there was a lot of children who came from farms and left at 15 or 16 to go and work on the family business, that was kind of their destiny. So I felt a little bit frustrated that I wasn't pushed more, didn't have more peers round me who were working at the same level. |
| R | Right, OK. The largely positive learning experience that you had, what do you think that was down to, largely? |
| MM | It was down to the personal investment by the teachers. |
| R | OK. You said that you took 2 languages to GCSE and Spanish to A Level, but thinking of MFL as a whole at the time, did you place a lot of value on MFL whilst you were at school, or did you place more value on the core subjects? |

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| MM | I really loved English and humanities and arts. I wouldn't have said MFL was my favourite but the teachers in MFL were some of the best teachers in the school, so that kind of influenced me very positively in its favour. |
| R | From the comments that you've made, I'm guessing that... was it a strong subject for you, did you achieve quite highly? |
| MM | At GCSE I got the highest grade in French and Spanish, but then it didn't go terribly well at A Level. I messed up my Spanish oral, Mr Martin, I was just nervous. |
| R | Did that put you off doing it for degree? |
| MM | Oh I wouldn't have ever considered doing it for degree, no. My sister did though, a French degree. |
| R | Did you go abroad quite often on family holidays? |
| MM | Not that often, no. |
| R | I mean did you ever visit countries where French or Spanish was spoken? |
| MM | We went on a French trip with school, but just a short one as I recall. My parents had a hotel, so we couldn't go on holidays like other families did because we were tied down to the hotel. I did do a Spanish exchange in Y10 but I didn't go abroad a lot. |
| R | Can you expand a little bit more on the Spanish exchange? How did that go? Can you remember where it was and the sort of things you did during that? |
| MM | It was 2 weeks and it wasn't anybody I knew. It was a girl called Susana who was a couple of years younger than me. We got ok but not brilliantly. I really got on well with her friends though, so it was positive. |
| R | And how did you cope with the language and the potential barriers, if there were any? |
| MM | Yes I found it much easier to be immersed in it actually. Yes I did pick up a lot while I was there, and sort of family life and out and about, signs and newspapers, things like that. |
| R | Fantastic. What do you think of France and Spain as a nation? |
| MM | I'm very positive about them. I'm positive about France - my brother-in-law is French, so we've got French nephews now, so I'm kind of positive about France generally. |
| R | The culture, and so on. I'm not going to go into the politics, as it can get quite complicated with Brexit and that side of things, but I'm looking at it from my mum's perspective. My mum is considerably older, she's nearly 80, but she has a very negative view of the French and she's always convinced that French people hate English people. But that clearly isn't the case, but there are still some generational conflict with how the older generation in England perceive the French, which is a bit of a shame really. |
| MM | I found Spanish people generally much more willing to listen to me trying to speak Spanish, they were more patient and tolerant of it, whereas the French can be a little bit 'if you're not fluent don't |

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| | bother'. So that's been more my experience. But it may be because more recently when I've been to France I've been with my brother-in-law who obviously is based there so he does the talking. But Spain - and although I haven't spoken Spanish since I did my A Level, I can still understand quite a lot of written Spanish, yes. |
| R | Do you still catch up with Spanish literature? |
| MM | Yes I'm still interested in Spanish film and Spanish literature, so I feel like that's the legacy from my A Level Spanish, just that kind of view into a different world and the kind of South American literature and Spanish literature. |
| R | Yes, it really does open up different avenues for you, great. Do you think that your views on foreign language learning have changed over the years? |
| MM | I probably think it's more important now than I did when I was a child. |
| R | OK. And why do you think that's the case? What do you think has influenced...? |
| MM | I feel like it's the economy. I feel like people who know languages and are fluent in languages have an advantage. I went to university with somebody who spoke 5 languages fluently and it was a great advantage for her. She was a lawyer but she'd been raised by Dutch parents and just spoke loads of languages, as the Dutch often do. |
| R | So as a summary, the influence has changed because you've noticed that languages have more of a value, given the multicultural nature of society? |
| MM | Yes, and nobody would have said to me at my school 'It's really important that you learn a language because it'll help you in your future career', nobody would have said that. You just studied it. |
| R | You just went through the motions really. |
| MM | Yes, exactly. |
| R | If you were given the opportunity, would you consider learning a foreign language now? |
| MM | That's a good question! I'd quite like to dust off my Spanish. I probably wouldn't start from scratch with German or something like that. |
| R | Are you not feeling adventurous to go for Russian or...? |
| MM | No, I'd much rather dust off a language that I'm already familiar with. |
| R | OK. Why is that? I know you already have some familiarity with it, but why would you feel like brushing it up? |
| MM | Well I might go off to Spain at some point and it would be quite nice to be able to communicate. I doubt I'll go to Russia, I might but I don't think it's very likely! |
| R | Do you think E's experience of learning a language at school has been different from your own? |
| MM | Yes, I think it's been much more positive. I'm not just saying that. |

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| R | That was another thing I forgot to mention. I try not to be biased as his language teacher. In what ways do you think it's very different from your own? |
| MM | I think you're much friendlier than my language teachers were. |
| R | From what I've heard, I've never been described as volcanic before. |
| MM | No! I think just encouraging, you know 'Sarah's not a natural linguist', that I don't think those are necessarily fall from your lips. |
| R | Not at all. |
| MM | So I think it's generally a more positive learning environment. And I think that in combination with the fact he's got a French uncle and one of his other uncles is head of MFL at Marlborough College, so he will hear Pete and Mathieu speaking French over the dinner table and he hears his cousins talking French, and that sort of normalises the experience of another language spoken in the family. |
| R | Yes, that's brilliant. So that exposure obviously is really positive. |
| MM | So I think the positive nature of... school under you, and the positive nature in the wider family, those 2 things together. are really positive. |
| R | Amazing. Do you feel you have had an influence over E's thoughts and views of language learning? |
| MM | No, I wouldn't say language specific to MFL. I would think a fairly strong influence in terms of we do our best and aspire and achieve, and learning is a journey and there's so much to be got out of it, so very kind of positive about education generally. I wouldn't sort of single out MFL in that. We play around with words quite a lot at home, generally as a family we're wordsmiths rather than numbers based. So that probably comes across, but it wouldn't be specific to MFL. |
| R | This next question could be deemed controversial. Do you believe that languages should have the same status as Maths, English and Science? |
| MM | Oh, isn't that interesting? Yes I do actually, I'm quite in favour of the IB approach, not narrowing ourselves down and I quite like that holistic 6 different disciplines that are all kind of held in equal status. I think that's very positive. |
| R | Yes. I taught the IB at a previous school, so joining it all together with theory of knowledge as well as having to study a language, I agree, I think the IB approach is a very much more holistic approach to learning. Where do you see the future of foreign language learning heading? |
| MM | Good gracious, what a question! I don't really feel like it's changed that much in the last 30 years since I was at school, so I don't see a vastly different approach in the education system generally to language learning. I still think as a nation we're not brilliant at it. So, you know, the Dutch are fantastic, the Belgians are very good linguists, these sort of small nations that are kind of buffeted by lots |

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| | of different languages. I think generally Europeans seem to be much more adept at languages than we are and I don't think much has changed in the last 30 years. That's just my perception. |
| R | I think that's a very valid point. So we've come to the end of your section. Is there anything you'd like to add on these issues that we've discussed, is there anything that you'd like to expand on? |
| MM | No, I'm just really pleased to be able to help. I think it's really interesting. |
| R | Fantastic. So I'm just going to pause the recording and go and grab E and if I could ask you very kindly to pop next door. |
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| R | So E is now with me, thank you for joining me E. As I said, I am your language teacher, so I want you to be honest, I want you to imagine that I'm not your language teacher, although that's not going to be easy. Can you tell me about your experience of learning a language so far at school? |
| E (E) | All schools that I've been to? So, I started off back in Y3 where my teacher gave me a little bit of an insight into the food in France. So he told me about different foods in French and I discovered that one of my best friends there was French and he could speak it very fluently and I was always asking him how he could do it and he just said practice makes perfect. In Y4 we went through the different modes of transport. In Y5 we carried on with modes of transport. In Y6 I did Latin because I'd left my old school and I followed junior books called Minimus and Minimus Secundus and I learned a lot, like for instance that pater is father, mater is mother, and so on. In Y7 when I came to St George's I started learning French with Mr Martin, my current French teacher. In Y8 I continued learning Y8 French, preparing for my options evening, hopefully to take GCSE French in Y9. |
| R | Brilliant. And would you say that your experience of learning a language has been a positive one or a negative one? |
| E | So it's really quite (???) positive learning French and Latin. |
| R | Can you describe your language lessons to me? |
| E | So for instance, what would happen is, this has happened in all of my schools, we would see pictures of what a mode of transport or food was like, it would say it in French and they'd get us to repeat it so we could store it in our minds. We sometimes play fun games, like who can have the best memory, who can roll the dice the fastest and write the most words, writing paragraphs. Sometimes we do exams and these exams help you improve and teach myself what I need to do better next time. |
| R | And do they help you with developing your understanding of French? |
| E | I think they do, yes. |
| R | Bit of a daft question, really: do you enjoy your language lessons? |
| E | Yes I really do. |

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| R | And so what do you think about MFL as a subject and what do you think influences the way you think about MFL? |
| E | I think of it as a really good opportunity, that it can help you later on in life when you get a career, possibly in a foreign country and it's helpful to have a language or two. |
| R | Great. And what do you think influences your views? Is it the prospect of a job using languages, or do you think there's something else that may influence you? |
| E | Well one of the things is me having French cousins who live near Paris in a little town called Melan (?) They can speak 2 languages, French and English, very fluently, my auntie and uncle taught them to... my uncle would speak to them in French, my auntie would speak to them in English and they would both pick it up. Also I'd possibly like to be an engineer when I'm older, so I know that I need to work really hard at French so that's what I'm doing at the moment. |
| R | Excellent. How would you describe your behaviour and the behaviour of others in your language lessons? |
| E | I think it's fine. I don't get distracted, I get on very well with the other people in my class. |
| R | And do you think the behaviour of others is positive? |
| E | Yes, I think it's positive. |
| R | And is the behaviour in your language lessons any different from other lessons in school? |
| E | I work very hard at French, and I think a lot of other people in my class who sometimes work hard at French and other times there are other people who are nah, French, I don't want to do it, let's drop it. |
| R | What about other subjects? |
| E | Whereas in other subjects my friends might take a different attitude to it, like, oh (???) yes this is fun. Even if I don't like the subject I will keep on working very hard at it. |
| R | Why do you think this is the case, that the behaviour changes? Do you think it's because maybe French is considered a boring academic subject, or more of a practical subject? |
| E | Maybe it's because, maybe they find it a bit harder, generally hard. But I know others can find it ok and generally want to do it as a language. |
| R | Do you go abroad with your family? |
| E | So, I have been abroad with my family in the last year. I've been to Cyprus when I was very young and the waiters there, they were really pleased because I tried out some of the Greek there, by saying kalispera which is good evening and kalimera which is good morning, they were really happy about that. In the Netherlands, my Dutch cousins spoke to me in Dutch and they gave me a lesson in how to speak a bit of Dutch, like hallo *(plus something else I can't even attempt! KD)* or something like that. And finally I've been to France quite a few times, and the most recent foreign trip was on |

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| | the French trip I went on in 2018 and that helped develop my French a lot. |
| R | Excellent. And what do you think of France? Do you like France as a country. |
| E | I think it's a very good country and it's got loads to explore there. It's got a very nice culture and language, famous landmarks and monuments, good food. Yes, it's a very nice country. |
| R | Excellent. If you were given the opportunity to choose, would you consider learning a language or would you consider dropping it? |
| E | I'd consider learning it. |
| R | And why is that? |
| E | Because I really feel like I should do it, because I enjoy it, I'm good at it (I'm not showing off here!) and I just genuinely think it would be good for me to take a language because it gives me a better chance to get into a university. |
| R | Excellent. What do your parents think of language learning? |
| E | I think they find it very good, how I'm fairly influenced to do French and different other languages. (Unclear) I think my mother used to do French but I don't know. Yes, we have French jokes in the house because my cousins, they have this thing like, they can't pronounce dishwasher right, so they say dishwasheeeer, so we have this thing called cucumbeeer *(plus a couple of others I can't make out!)* and so on, so we take a funny attitude towards French. |
| R | Do your parents share the same views towards language learning as you do, do you think? |
| E | I think they do, yes. |
| R | Do you think your parents influence your language learning in any way, and if so, how do you think? |
| E | Yes, I do because when my mum used to teach me Latin she was like oh yes this looks really fun, because it was about this little mouse who goes on so many journeys. The comic strips helped me work harder and I got through(?) a whole book of Latin, so I did well. They motivate me with my French as well. |
| R | OK, so you were able to start noticing how Latin evolved and how Latin has an influence on the French language? |
| E | Yes. I'm now going to see if I can Facetime my cousins and uncle and aunt to see if I can speak to them in French, so it's an opportunity basically. That's the way it's influenced me, I guess. |
| R | Excellent, well done. Thank you very much E. That's the end of your section. Is there anything else you'd like to add yourself to the conversation? |
| E | Yes. I hope I can choose it for GCSE. |
| R | I think you can choose it for GCSE! I think you'll be able to. Thank you very much E. |
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| R | Thank you very much, I've now got both of you together. So, which of you has the most positive views on language learning in your opinion, and why? Or would you say it was the same? |
| E and MM | The same. |
| R | So how important do you think learning a language is? |
| MM and E | Very important. |
| R | Should MFL be made a compulsory subject at GCSE? |
| MM | Yes |
| E | I think so, yes. |
| R | Why do you think that is the case? |
| E | I think it's important because it could help a lot of people, especially giving a good chance of getting into a university, possibly using the language in a foreign country one day if they visit it and need to get something. |
| MM | Yes, and also about the holistic approach of not narrowing options down. |
| R | What skills, other than linguistic ones, do you think you gain from language learning? |
| MM | I think it helps to learn about different cultures. |
| R | Anything else? |
| E | (?) It stores some language in your brain to know about it. |
| R | But think about when you're talking to other people, for example, what sort of skills do you think you're picking up from doing that? |
| E | Interacting. |
| R | Yes, so you're interacting and it's like interpersonal skills, isn't it? Do you agree? So it's helping people develop their social skills is another one. Fabulous, we're nearing the end! So I'm not sure if you're aware but there is actually a decline in the number of students studying a language at GCSE? You did. What are your thoughts about the decline of students wishing to continue a language at GCSE, and why do you think that this is a problem? |
| MM | I think it's a real shame. |
| E | I agree. |
| MM | Lots of students are narrowing their options down really early on in academic life. What was the second part of the question? |
| R | Why do you think lots of students are choosing not to continue their language learning. |
| MM | Because it's hard work and it's a lot of extra effort to learn a language. And sadly lots of people are encouraged to take the easier path. |
| R | Do you agree with that, E? |
| E | Yes. |
| R | From a student's point of view, why do you think that some of your peers are wishing to drop a language? |

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| E | Well I think people are wishing to drop it because they're just finding it a bit too hard at the moment and they don't really cooperate with the subject as well as other people normally do. |
| R | What do you think about the languages that are currently on offer in school? French and Spanish. |
| E | What about German? |
| MM | Yes well I think French and Spanish is a great offer, personally. |
| E | I agree. |
| R | Do you think that any other subjects should be added? |
| E | I know you're secretly teaching German |
| R | I am secretly teaching German, shhh! Would you prefer E to learn a different language if the opportunity ever arose? |
| MM | Other than French? |
| R | Yes |
| MM | I'd be quite interested in Italian. |
| E | It would be interesting, but I do like French as well. |
| MM | We're probably biased towards the French because of the family connections. |
| R | Yes, great. And last question: are you looking forward to starting your GCSE in September? If you decide to choose French, which I have on very good authority that you are! |
| E | Yes. |
| R | Excellent. Is there anything you'd like to add, both of you, to the discussion as a whole? We've discussed quite a lot this afternoon and you can probably tell I'm quite passionate about the subject, but is there anything you would like to add to the discussion? |
| MM | Are there fewer people training to be MFL teachers as a result of more children dropping it earlier on? |
| R | That's a really good question, yes. Because of the reduction in numbers of students taking it at GCSE and beyond, that means that there are also declining numbers of people studying it at university. Consequently you may have heard that some universities are looking at closing their languages department entirely. |
| MM | It's a spiral then, isn't it? |
| R | It really is, yes. So it is a real shame and of course you're right - because there's a reduction in the number of students taking a language at degree level then there are fewer people going forward to train to teach really. So it's a bit of a vicious circle unfortunately. So we're trying to break that vicious circle, if you like, to try and motivate the students a little more to learn a foreign language and hopefully take it a little further like you did at A Level. If we can get students to university to do a language, better still. But it's a bit of a sad situation, unfortunately.<br><br>Thank you ever so much for your participation, both of you. What I can do once I have actually listened to the conversation, I will |

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| | literally transcribe this word for word. Before I use it in my research, would you like to check over the transcript to check that it's a true representation of the conversation? |
| MM | No |
| R | ... or do you trust me? Excellent. Thank you once again and that's the end of the interview. |

## Appendix 8. Example Interview Transcript (Dyad 5 – state school)

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| Chris Martin (R) | Thank you C for agreeing to be interviewed. First of all, can you tell me about your own experience of learning a foreign language at school. |
| C (C) | I did German at school and really enjoyed it, it was one of my favourite subjects. I remember doing French a little bit and not liking it and choosing German, and really enjoying it basically. I got an A in GCSE German and I wanted to do A Level but I was discouraged from doing A Level. |
| R | Oh ok, why was that, do you think? |
| C | I was told that the gap, the leap between GCSE and A Level was too big and that I might struggle with it, and I just sort of went along with that, and I do regret that because it was one of my favourite subjects, definitely. |
| R | That's quite interesting that you should say that. I want to go onto that a little bit later on. Did you have a positive learning experience in general when you were at school? |
| C | I think so, yes. I suppose because I enjoyed it I did, but I do think it's difficult within school, I do remember it being hard and other students not having a very good attitude and there being a lot of messing around and people feeling quite self-conscious and being a bit silly and not wanting to speak the language and things like that. But I did enjoy it, yes, on the whole it was positive, yes. |
| R | I mean the learning experience in general, across every subject, not just specific to languages. Your overall learning experience in secondary school. |
| C | No I don't think it was great really, I don't feel like I learned a lot in school and I didn't enjoy most of my subjects. |
| R | And what was this largely down to, do you think? |
| C | I think in secondary school it was largely down to not being very confident, being quite an introverted person and just the environment at the time, when everything was a bit crazy socially and emotionally. Being a quiet student I think you get overlooked by the teachers quite a lot as well. |
| R | That's interesting. My next question, you've already answered, did you enjoy learning a language at school and you've already explained that. Why did you enjoy learning the language? What was it that made German more special than French, for example? |
| C | I just thought it was fun and interesting, I think, to learn a different language. I'm not sure, I think I related, like the similarities between English and German I think are what I enjoyed, whereas French seemed really different to me and really weird. I think that now I've looked at a bit more French as an adult I can see that there's cross-overs between French and English as well, but I remember at the time not liking the sound of French, not liking the words, thinking it was just really alien. Whereas I saw the similarities in German, but |

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| | then I did also obviously like the differences, what made it interesting to learn, and I just liked the idea of being able to speak in a different language. I just found that quite exciting really. |
| R | Did you go abroad often on family holidays? |
| C | No, never. |
| R | So you never visited countries like Germany or France or Spain or... |
| C | No. As a child I was brought up by my grandparents, and we didn't have a lot of money. So family holidays were never abroad, so I didn't travel, no, as a young person or have that kind of cultural experience. |
| R | Did you ever go on school trips abroad? |
| C | I went on one, I think in Y7 or 8 to France, and then I wanted to go on the German trip but I couldn't afford to go. I did want to, but you know, I couldn't do it. |
| R | Do you think that the trip to France was beneficial to you in any way? I know that you said that you didn't really like French, but do you think that the trip itself was beneficial to you? |
| C | I don't think it was at the time. I don't think it had much of an impact really. |
| R | If you were given the opportunity, would you consider learning a foreign language now? |
| C | Yes definitely. I have been learning foreign languages as an adult, when I get the time. |
| R | OK, which ones? |
| C | I've gone back to German and I've started Spanish and I've done a little tiny bit of French. |
| R | Excellent. How are you doing that, is it through using apps like Duolingo and stuff like that or...? |
| C | Yes, it's a combination of things. I do the Spanish course through the university, a beginners' course at the Telford Centre. But mostly I'm using audiobooks and Duolingo. So yes, a combination really. |
| R | Excellent. What does D think of learning a language? |
| C | I think he's mixed at the moment. I think he enjoyed it initially but to be honest he's struggling with his German teacher at the moment and that's putting him off. |
| R | OK. Do you feel that you have influenced him at all in terms of his experiences of learning a language? |
| C | I think so, because (unclear) languages and talking about it, and so I'm pretty sure I probably have. |
| R | Do you believe that languages should have the same status of English, Maths and Science, and if so, why or why not? |
| C | (a bit muffled) I don't ...even though I think there's a lot of value in learning a language I do think that a lot of people won't get to use it or necessarily need it throughout their life in the same way. So I think it should be optional. |
| R | You think it should still remain optional? |

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| C | I do yes. I do think it should be encouraged, but I don't think it should have the same status. |
| R | And finally, where do you see the future of foreign language learning heading? |
| C | In this country, for young people, or in general? |
| R | Just in this country for young people, yes. |
| C | I'm not sure really, I don't think that people are all that bothered in general when I speak to people or see the value of it, so I do think that it might become less important possibly. I don't think there's much of a driver for it because I do think there's an attitude that in the business world most people speak English. I don't personally see it improving or becoming more popular, I think it would be good if it did but I don't think it will. |
| R | OK, thank you very much, that's your part of the interview done. So if I could speak to D now that would be great then I'll ask for you to come back in shortly. |
| C | Fine, I'll just get him for you. |
| | (D enters) |
| R | Hi D, are you ok? I want you to answer these questions as honestly as possible. So I know your Mum's in the room but I want you to be honest. |
| C | OK. |
| R | So can you tell me about your experience of learning a language so far? |
| D (D) | I find it quite fun, but obviously it is the environment, the people around me. |
| R | OK, so you're saying the other people around you are affecting your experience? |
| D | Yes |
| R | OK. I'm going to get onto that in just a minute. But I just want you to be aware that what you say to me is never going to go back to your school, ok? So you can be as brutally honest as you want. So my next question, then, can you describe your language lessons to me? What kinds of activities do you do, and so on? |
| D | We mainly listen to a sort of like person speaking in the language and then kind of translate it into what we think it is. |
| R | OK. Do you do anything else? |
| D | We mainly just do like booklet work. We have this booklet where we have a bunch of challenges in it and you have to complete the challenges. |
| R | OK. Do you get to do lots of speaking practice? |
| D | We have a few lessons of speaking practice, but we don't get as much as I'd want. |
| R | OK. So would you say that your lessons are interactive, do they get you out of your seat, moving about or do you think it's mainly based in textbooks and things? |

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| D | It's mainly based in textbooks and sitting down. |
| R | OK. Do you think it helps you with developing your understanding of German? The activities that you do? |
| D | In a way, but I'd prefer if it was sort of more interactive instead of just reading it, because you don't learn it as well. |
| R | OK, good. So this goes on to what you were saying a bit earlier on about the environment - how would you describe the behaviour of the people in your language lessons? |
| D | In my language lessons there's quite a few people who don't behave. So when they mess around the teacher has to deal with them instead of talking to us about the subject. |
| R | OK, got you. And is the behaviour in your lessons any different from the other lessons, do you think? |
| D | Yes. People don't seem to take it as serious as my other lessons. |
| R | OK. So they tend to behave better mainly in lessons like Maths, English and they don't so much in MFL. |
| D | Yes |
| R | Right. Why do you think this is the case then? Why do you think they misbehave more in MFL than they do in the others? |
| D | Maybe because they think it's not such an important subject, so they don't think they need to take it that serious, rather than the ones they have to do. |
| R | OK, go you. Do you go abroad with your family? |
| D | Not often, but we did last summer, twice. |
| R | OK, where did you go, nice? |
| D | We went to Cyprus and Barcelona. |
| R | OK, so you've been to a Spanish-speaking country, that's good. Have you been on any school trips abroad? |
| D | Yes, we went to Germany a couple of days ago? |
| R | OK, and how was that? |
| D | It was pretty good. |
| R | What did you do whilst you were there? |
| D | We mainly went tobogganing. We didn't talk much German while we were in Germany because the teachers did all of the talking to the people. |
| R | OK, so you weren't given a huge amount of opportunity to practise? |
| D | Yes, the most talking we did was in a cafe ordering food or something. |
| R | OK. Did you find the trip useful in any way? |
| D | I did because it was more active than sitting down and learn and learning German. Walking around we could hear the German people speaking actual fluent German instead of just sat around people messing around. |
| R | Got you, OK. If you were given the opportunity to choose, would you continue learning a language or would you consider dropping it? And why? |

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| D | Well, I don't really like the people around me (muffled), but if I carry on they might drop German so I might have a better environment. So I've carried on German. |
| R | OK, great. Do you think your parents like learning languages? |
| D | Yes |
| R | OK. And do you think they influence the way you think about language learning? And if so, how do you think they influence you? |
| D | Mainly my mum does because she likes learning quite a lot of languages, and trying to learn them. She tries to make me want to learn a language at school. |
| R | Right, OK. Do you think you're going to possibly use a language later on in life? |
| D | Yes (muffled) different places I'm not going to be able to communicate. |
| R | Thank you D. I'm going to ask you to stay where you are, and then I'm going to ask your mum to join in as well now. Alright? So again, I know your mum's there, but if she elbows you or anything to say something different, then it's ok!<br>I've already asked you this question, C, but D do you think that languages should be made compulsory for all students at GCSE? Do you think everyone should do it? |
| D | Some students do actually struggle with language, learning it. So you feel like they should be able to drop it. |
| R | OK, good answer. So this question's to both of you. In the past couple of months, there's been a lot in the news about the decline of the number of students wishing to continue learning a language at GCSE. Why do you think lots of students choose not to continue with the language? I know we said that lots of people find it difficult, but do you think there are other reasons as to why they may drop it? |
| D | It might be because all their other friends might be dropping it as well, so they might all want to be together. So they're all influenced by each other just to leave it. |
| R | So peer pressure, almost? |
| D | Yes |
| R | OK. What do you think, C? |
| C | I think there's .... unclear ... the way people are thinking, a bit more isolated. Most young people are thinking I might go and work abroad, I might go and work in Europe, or it might be useful to have this language. Because I do think there's more, I guess not the European languages, there's anti-Europe sentiment going around. D'you know what I'm saying, I'm not explaining that very well.<br>*(Much of this was very muffled.)* |
| R | But basically I think what you're talking about there is the impact of Brexit and things like that? |

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| C | Yes. I do think there's an attitude coming more to the forefront, hearing more from adults around and that's perhaps discouraging them from thinking there is a value. |
| R | Thank you. Again, this is to you D and to you C. What do you think about the languages that are currently on offer in your school? What do you think about the choice of languages? |
| D | I feel like there should be a few more language choices. |
| R | OK. Such as? |
| D | I've heard like they do like Spanish and stuff. |
| C | I know most schools tend to do both German and French, or German and Spanish, don't they, and I think Spanish is probably a really useful one because so many speak Spanish outside of Europe, don't they? And also if one language doesn't click with you, another one might. So perhaps if they could offer more, the right language might click with someone. |
| R | OK. D, would you prefer to learn a language if the opportunity arose? |
| D | Other than German? |
| R | Yes |
| D | I really wouldn't. I find German quite similar to English words, so I find it a little bit more easy than languages. |
| R | What skills do you think, other than linguistic ones, ones to do with language, do you think you learn, pick up, in language lessons? So, other than ones that are related to say, identifying a noun or an adjective, or this is a tense, what other skills can language learning give you? |
| C | Communication skills, listening. |
| D | Focussing on words and trying to see what they are. So it could help you with English and stuff. |
| R | Would you say that was more linguistic, though, because you're looking for patterns and links between two different languages? I'm thinking more on the lines, as your mum says, about communication, what else do you think you could get from that? |
| C | I suppose, if you were talking, having a conversation, general communication, it could help with your confidence. I think a lot of young people are not confident at speaking another language, but it's about developing their general confidence at speaking. |
| R | Yes, so their confidence, their self-esteem. |
| C | Yes, and I think the adaptability as well. I know that that is linked to the linguistic element, but the fact that another language has sort of like different grammar and different structures, I think it encourages you to sort of think differently and be adaptable. |
| R | And it develops social skills as well. So social skills is not only to do with communication, it's also how you react around people. So for example if you go to Germany it's a completely different culture. So people might react differently if you do something that they might deem isn't normal, so to speak, in their culture. So social skills as |

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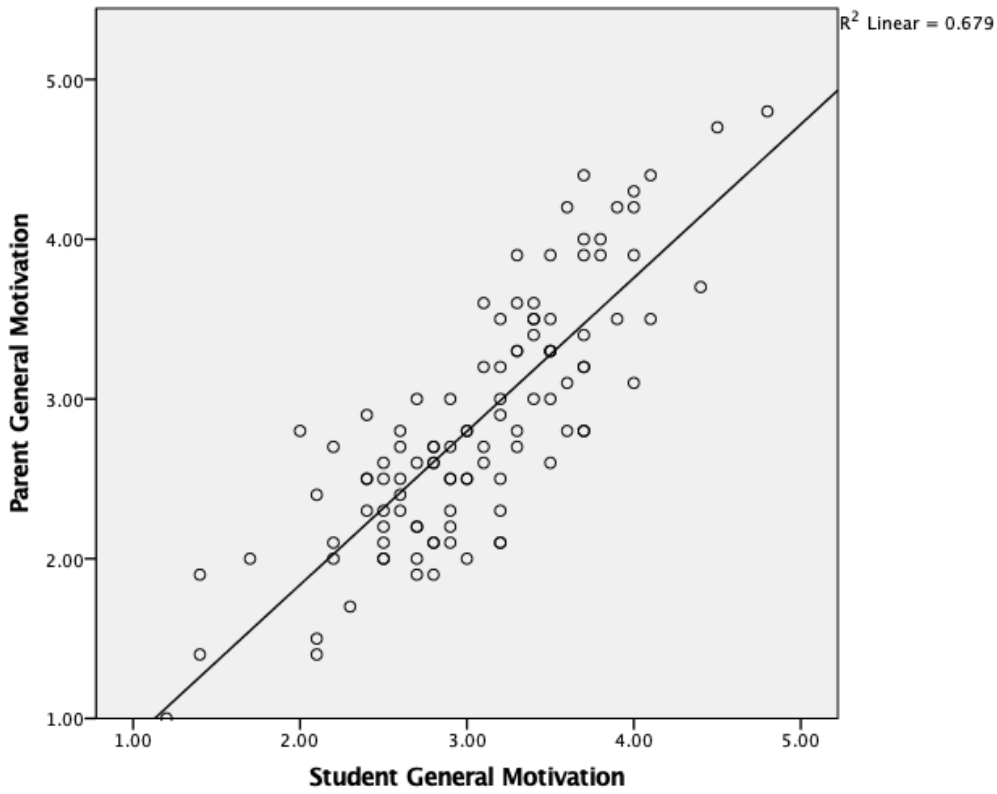
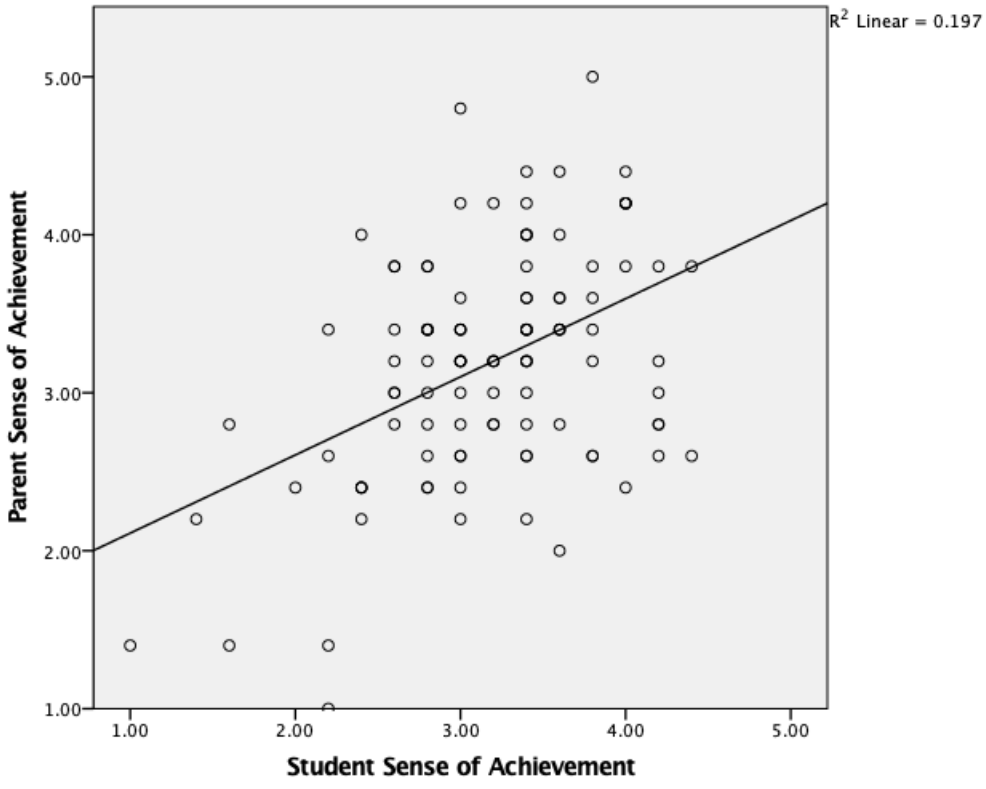
| | well, I think. Are you going to be continuing the language for GCSE, D, or do you not have a choice? |
| D | We continue another language. If I study a little bit more with the environment, I might drop it half way through Y9'ish. |
| C | Yes, so basically initially D wanted to drop German even though the school, they have different tracks and they prefer you to pick a language, but if you're really struggling in both you really don't want to do it, they will let you drop it and let you do more technical, practical options instead. So initially D wanted to do that. I encouraged him to do German and the school have encouraged him to give it a go. Because he's going into Y9 in September he will have time to change his mind. So what they've said is, yes, do German and he's agreed to that. But if it was going wrong and if he's really struggling, he does still have the option of dropping it right up until the end of Y9. So that's what we're going with at the moment. |
| R | That's good. OK, well I hope you do stick at it. I'll be honest, male language teachers or male linguists are actually fewer and far between, we're quite a rare species really. So every interview I've been to, for example, I've always been the only male language teacher that's ever gone for it, which is a bit strange, whether that's just the luck of the draw. But I think that's a big thing, and I think the fact you're in an environment where you're surrounded by people who aren't as motivated as you are to do a language then that obviously impacts on you quite a bit as well.<br>That's the end of my questions. Is there anything that you'd like to add to the discussion? |
| C | No I don't think so, thank you. |
| R | So, thank you so much for your participation. What I'm going to do is write up and do a transcription of the interview. I can forward that to check that you agree that that was a true reflection of the conversation, or if you trust me I can just crack on with that? |
| C | No that's fine, you don't need to do that. |
| R | OK, no problem. Thank you very much, it's been really good to talk to you both. |

## Appendix 9.Correlation Scatterplots

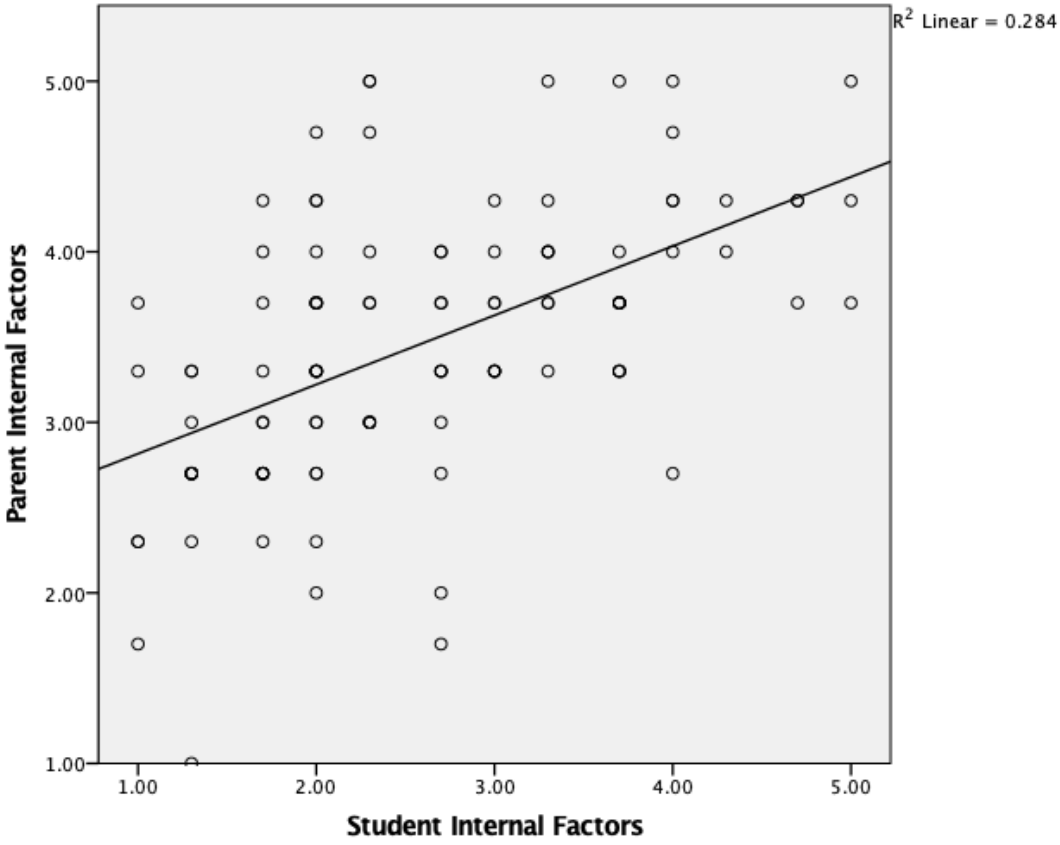
*General Motivation*



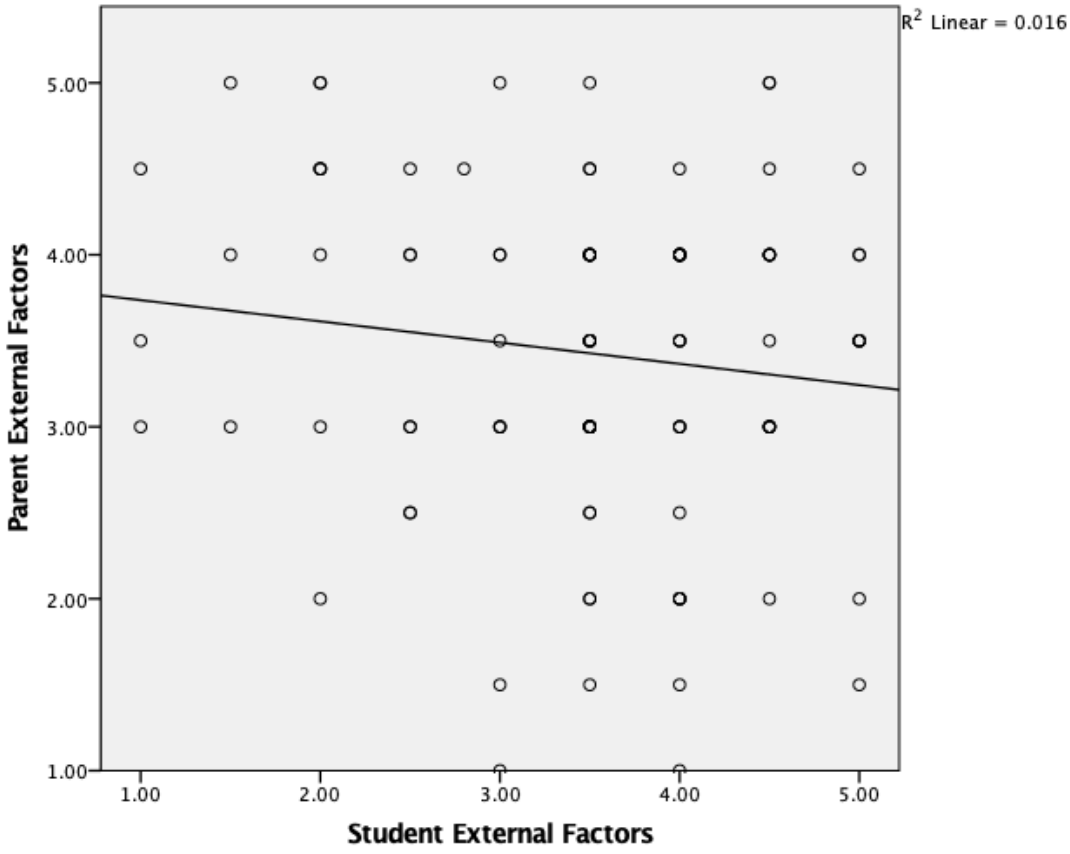

*Sense of Achievement in MFL*



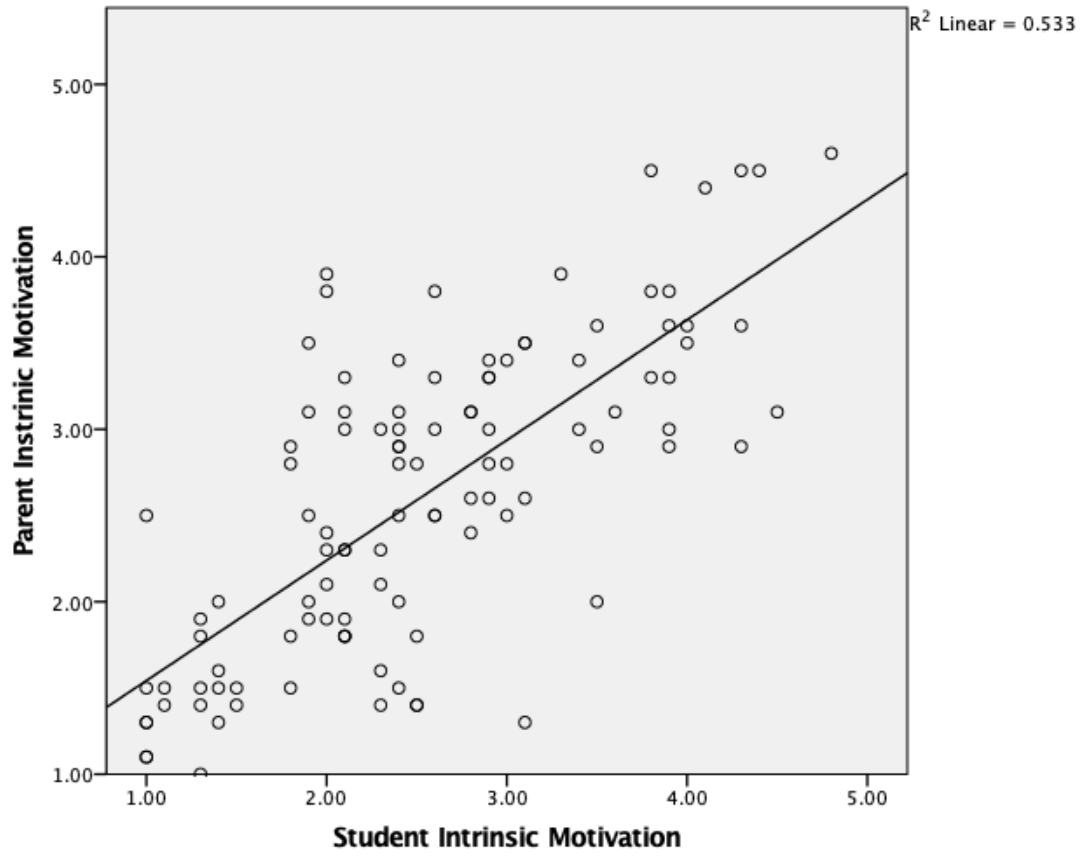
*Internal Attribution*




*External Attribution*



*Intrinsic Motivation*




*Extrinsic Motivation*